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Thesis
JEREMIAH'S CONCEPTION OF GOD
by
Katie Peterson Wieting
(B.R.E., B.U.S.R.E., 1931)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1932

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The prophet Jeremiah has a place of unique importance in the line of Hebrew prophets. In fact, that place of high achievement, if not of highest achievement, belongs only to Jeremiah. He stood closely related to his predecessors to whom he owed much; but he stands above them, too, in that he pushed far ahead the liberation of the eternal truths of religion from their temporary national embodiment. These eternal verities he found deeply rooted in the immutable character of God and the essential, characteristic nature of man. The conception of God, at which Jeremiah arrived, is an interesting study because it was so vitally related to the life of the prophet. The growth toward that conception involves the whole career of Jeremiah. It is possible to see how the prophet's own religious life grew and came to full fruition in the experience of living. Right out of the crucible of life itself Jeremiah shaped his conception of God and of religion; it is this fact that makes these conceptions real and valuable. It is the purpose of this thesis to make a study of the religious conceptions of Jeremiah; particularly, of his conception of God. It is the further aim and purpose to present those experiences in the prophet's life which were especially influential in the formulation of Jeremiah's thinking about the Divine.

The thinking of Jeremiah marks the highest genius that the prophetic

movement of Israel reached in the discovery of individual and personal fel-

NORMAL,
GROWING
DEVELOP-
MENT OF
JEREMIAH'S
THINKING

lowship with God. "His (Jeremiah's) is the last word of the Old Testament on the universal essence of religion; and we shall see how, in speaking it, he breaks through the limitations of the strictly prophetic consciousness, and moves out into the larger filial communion with God in which every child of man may share.

The discovery came to him through the stern discipline of his life, through long travail of soul, and much contact with the world of men; but it is the direction in which his life was guided from the first by the spirit of God, and long before the goal was consciously realised we catch glimpses of the steps by which he was led into the secret of personal communion with God.

. That life (of the prophet Jeremiah), like every human life, has its incidents, its conflicts and agonies, its heights and depths, its pathos and tragedy; and in all its varied experiences it is an instructive and fascinating study. But through all its merely human aspects we can see in it the efflorescence of the spiritual principles which are the essence of the prophetic movement in Israel." (1)

The other Hebrew prophets showed an equally great fervor and singleness of purpose as did Jeremiah. Perhaps he did not excel them even

JEREMIAH'S
UNIQUE CON-
TRIBUTION:
PERSONAL
RELIGION

in his conception of God, the development of which is the chief concern of this thesis; but in the spiritualization, in a personal manner, of that conception, Jeremiah is unsur-

passed. Throughout the whole book of Jeremiah the strong personal note and emphasis is present. The prophet's inmost soul is revealed to us. We see him, struggling, suffering - always conscious that his very life depended upon God's presence with him. All his trials and sufferings served

(1) John Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, pp. 16-17.

only to strengthen his reliance on God and his consciousness of God's fellowship with him. Here lies the secret of Jeremiah's power and of his subsequent greatness. He learned that material prosperity did not constitute man's happiness, and that peace and strength and stability of soul are enjoyed only by those who live lives of uprightness and feel themselves at one with God. It is this consciousness of union with God that gave Jeremiah the urge and dynamic impulse to all endeavor, and it is this same consciousness and conception of God that gave the prophet his sense of conviction of confident victory in spite of evident and apparent failure.

CRITICAL RESEARCH AND STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

CHAPTER ONE

CRITICAL RESEARCH AND STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

CRITICAL RESEARCH AND STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Our interest in the Book of Jeremiah is unique. For one thing, it is our most reliable source for the long period of history which it covers; and, for another thing, it reveals prophecy to us in a most intensely human phase as it manifested itself through that attractive and lovable personality that was subject to the doubts, moods and passions to which we ourselves are subject when we care at all about the execution of ideals which our souls have seen and recognised.

It seems, in brief introduction to the study of the book, that when Jeremiah had been teaching and preaching for twenty-two years this material was summarised in a book which also contained some autobiographical material. This was done in about 604 B.C. and was destroyed by King Jehoiakim in that same year. In 603 B.C. it was rewritten and expanded. Between 603 and 586 B.C., and even later, Jeremiah continued to prophesy, and to commit his poems to writing. Many of Jeremiah's other thoughts were taken down by Baruch, Jeremiah's faithful scribe. Both the books of prophecy created by Jeremiah and the biographical data compiled by Baruch (and perhaps other disciples) suffered interpolation and rearrangement. This collection of material called "The Book of Jeremiah" has reached us in two forms, the Greek and the Hebrew texts, the Septuagint text and the Massoretic text. These are differently arranged and they differ in extent. These differences will be discussed in a later paragraph.

The following is an outline of the contents of the Book of Jeremiah as it stands. This is not a chronological outline but rather one of subject

OUTLINE OF
THE BOOK OF
JEREMIAH IN
ITS PRESENT
ORDER

matter so far as any order is observable:

I. Chapters 1-45: Prophecies relating to Jerusalem and the history of the times.

A. Chapters 1-20: Prophecies from the time of Jeremiah's call (13th year of Josiah's reign) to the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

B. Chapters 21-25: 14: Prophecies directed against the kings of Judah and the false prophets.

C. Chapter 25:15-38: Summary of the fuller predictions against the foreign countries found in Chapters 46-51.

D. Chapters 26-28: Prophecies concerning the doom and fall of Jerusalem.

E. Chapter 29: Letter and message to the exiles in Babylon.

F. Chapters 30-31: Prophecies of comfort and hope.

G. Chapters 32-44: History of the two years preceding the capture and destruction of Jerusalem; also, the prophecies of Jeremiah at this time.

H. Chapter 45: A supplementary notice by Baruch, the scribe.

II. Chapters 46-51: Prophecies Concerning the Foreign Nations.

- A. Chapter 46: Oracle against Egypt
- B. Chapter 47: Oracle against the Philistines
- C. Chapter 48: Oracle against Moab
- D. Chapter 49:1-6: Oracle against Ammon
- E. Chapter 49:7-22: Oracle against Edom
- F. Chapter 49:23-27: Oracle against Damascus
- G. Chapter 49:28-33: Oracle against Kedar and Hazor
- H. Chapter 49:34-39: Oracle against Elam
- I. Chapters 50-51: Oracle against Babylon

III. Chapter 52: Supplementary and Historical Excerpt from II Kings.

The book begins with the call of Jeremiah. He is represented as being young and inexperienced (1:6), so that he could not have been born earlier than 650 B.C.; most scholars are agreed that he was born, probably, in 645 B.C. Jeremiah is pictured as being divinely preordained to his great and unrewarding task even before his birth. In two visions the prophet sees the impending doom of Israel as coming from the inroads of the Scythians, the enemy from the north. Chapters 2:1-3:5 show Israel to be false to Jehovah's love and turning to Egypt, Assyria, and the powerless Baals for help. Jehovah will still receive Israel if she will but turn to Him in penitence (3:19-4:4). The rest of chapter 4 is made up of powerful poems about the wild Scythian hordes. Jeremiah counsels the people to gather in the fortified cities. Chapters 5 and 6 reveal Jere-

miah's grief at the lack of conscience and understanding on the part of the people, and his fear over the threatened Scythian invasion.

Chapter 7 introduces us to the reign of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah attempts to shake the people out of their smug complacency and false confidence in the idea that the temple and the ritual will save them from disaster. In chapters 8 to 10 the prophet sees the coming destruction with sorrowful eyes and sings about it in unspeakably touching elegies.

Chapter 11 tells us that Jeremiah feels himself divinely led to carry on an itinerant campaign throughout the land of Judah in support of the Deuteronomic Reform. In Anathoth, the village of his birth, a brutal plot is made against his life by his own townsmen. This raises doubts in the mind of the prophet but he is reminded that worse things still are to come. Chapter 12 is a poem of lament over the desolation of Judah. In chapter 13 the incurable corruption of his fellowmen is symbolically revealed to Jeremiah who, in turn, announces the imminent fall of Judah and the terrific shadows of exilic days.

Chapters 14 to 17 represent the desperate situation of the people of Judah. The doom seems nearer and nearer. Jeremiah complains of his bitter and lonely fate, but he is assured of divine support. Because of the approaching doom the prophet is forbidden to marry in order thus not to involve more souls in the coming disaster. More and more Jeremiah is thrown back upon himself and upon Jehovah.

In chapters 18 to 20 the conditional nature of prophecy is made plain to Jeremiah as he sees a potter refashioning a vessel which has been spoiled.

Judah has the privilege of repenting, but her obstinacy makes the doom inevitable and sure. This truth the prophet proclaims fearlessly in the temple court and he is cast into prison. After his release from prison Jeremiah distinctly announces the exile to Babylon, ending with a passionate and sincere cry showing how heavily the burdens of his people also bore down upon him. He cries out in genuine anxiety and pain over the miseries of his life as a prophet from which he could not escape if he would.

Chapter 21 (probably a late section of the book) deals with the relation of Zedekiah to the siege of Jerusalem. Chapters 22 to 23 deal with kings and prophets. The incompetence of earthly rulers is contrasted with the true king. The prophets are denounced for their easy optimism, lack of stability, their falsity, and their immorality.

Jeremiah pictures the difference between the exiles and those who remained in Jerusalem in chapter 24; the contrast is not favorable to those who remained in Judah. In chapter 25 Jeremiah announces that the length of the exile will be seventy years. In the end Babylon herself will be punished.

Chapters 26 to 29 are usually thought of as coming from the hand of Baruch, Jeremiah's faithful scribe. Chapter 26 relates the consequences of Jeremiah's courageous temple sermon, which aroused the hostility and enmity of the priests and nearly cost the prophet his life. Chapter 27 is usually agreed upon by scholars to be a letter from Jeremiah to the exiles. Chapters 27 to 29 reveal the calm wisdom of Jeremiah as he met the ill-grounded ambitions and hopes of his countrymen at home and in Babylon. He counseled the exiles to be subject to Babylon and to settle down comfortably in their adopted land, making

the most of the situation. The superficial prophets of the exile felt Jeremiah to be an intruder, and their resentment and opposition were duly aroused.

Chapters 30 to 34 are full of promise and the hope of restoration in which Jeremiah never once failed to believe. Present woe is to be followed by a period of happiness. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and Jehovah will reveal his love by restoring his people again. To this love will follow a happy, spontaneous and natural response from the people who will have Jehovah's law written in their hearts. Jeremiah made concrete this feeling of confidence and hope by purchasing some land from a kinsman in Anathoth. Chapter 34 plunges us back into the black present with which Jeremiah was dealing. Jerusalem and the king alike are doomed because of evident treachery.

Chapter 35 comes from the reign of Jehoiakim. Here is contrasted the faithfulness of the Rechabites to the commands of their fathers with Israel's disregard for the laws of Jehovah.

Chapters 36 to 45 make up an historical section, probably written by Baruch and added to by subsequent writers and editors. (Chapter 39:4-13 is not found in the Septuagint.) In chapter 36 we are told how Jeremiah began to dictate his prophecies to Baruch and how the book came into being. Jehoiakim recklessly destroys this work after it is read to him. The book is written again with many additions. The other chapters center around the siege of Jerusalem and the events immediately following.

Chapters 46 to 51 are oracles against the foreign nations. The authenticity of these chapters is rightly questioned for they lack Jeremiah's characteristic originality and emotional expression.

Chapter 52 narrates the capture of Jerusalem and the exile of the people. It seems to be taken bodily from II Kings 24:18-25:30; it is safe to assert that this chapter was not written by Jeremiah.

Certain interesting differences obtain when the Greek version of the Book of Jeremiah is compared with the Hebrew text. This is true first of all in its arrangement. The second and third sections of the book change places; the oracles against the foreign nations (chapters 46 to 51) together with chapter 25:15-36 immediately follow the oracles about Judah (1:1-25:13), omitting verse 14 altogether, and thus leaving the mainly narrative section to be finished off with the narrative extract from II Kings.

The Septuagint contains about 2,700 words, or one-eighth of the whole shorter than the Hebrew text. It has, however, about one hundred words which are not found in the Hebrew text. In examining the omissions and allowing for possible mistakes due to badly written manuscripts and carelessness, the Greek text seems, in many instances, to preserve the more original form, more so than does the Massoretic text. The Septuagint is more likely to be the more accurate because whatever originals there were must have been used by these translators. We are warned, however, against choosing one text in preference to the other. "Sometimes the Hebrew preserves the original text, sometimes the LXX, and each case must be decided on its merits in the light of the general considerations which have been enumerated. Nor can it be said with any confidence which of the two preserves the greater number of original readings. In the great majority of instances the differ-

ence is intrinsically trivial. It is in their mass, and to a certain extent their distribution, that they become important." (1)

The Hebrew text has a longer chapter 27 than does the Septuagint.

These additions represent Jeremiah as interested in the restoration of the holy temple vessels. This position, we know, is altogether inconsistent with what we know of Jeremiah's attitude to the material and external symbols of religion. Chapter 33:14-26 is also omitted in the Greek text. This section declares that there will always be a Levitical priest to offer burnt offerings; this also is not characteristic of the prophetic attitude of Jeremiah toward sacrifice. More often than not the omissions of the Septuagint represent a better and more original text than the longer readings of the Massoretic text. However, the position of the oracles in the Book of Jeremiah which is given in the Massoretic text is to be preferred to that given by the Septuagint because the whole is thus represented as being more coherent.

The Book of Jeremiah may be divided into four sections distinguished from one another by certain general differences; these are:

- I. Prophecies relating mainly to Judah, with a few narrative sections interspersed - chapters 1-25.
- II. Narratives, including some prophecies (particularly in chapters 30-33) - chapters 26-45.
- III. Prophecies concerning foreign nations - chapters 46-51.
- IV. Extract from II Kings 25 - chapter 52.

The authenticity of the various chapters of the Book of Jeremiah is a hotly debated question. There are those chapters which obviously, because of

(1) A. S. Peake, Jeremiah and Lamentations, p. 68.

OUTLINE OF style or subject matter, do not come from Jeremiah; then there
 THE BOOK OF are those chapters of which we can be reasonably sure that Jere-
 JEREMIAH AS TO PROBABLE miah was the author or dictator. But there are certain other
 AUTHENTICITY sections of which we cannot be so sure and on which there is much difference of
 opinion. The following is a suggested arrangement (in quite close agreement
 with Sellin):

I. Portions directly from the words of Jeremiah:

1:1-9:26; 10:17-17:18; 18; 20:7-18; 21:11-14;
 22-25:11; 25:15-26; 27; 30-32: 35.

II. Portions written by Baruch: 19; 20:1-6:

21:1-10; 26; 28; 29; 33:1-13; 34; 36-45; 47;
 and, the kernel of 46; 48; 49.

III. Portions added by later writers: 10:1-16;

17:19-27; 25:12-14; 25:27-38; 33:14-26;
 39:1-13; parts of 46; 48; 49; and, the whole
 of chapters 50-52.

Thus we see the difficulty evident in the study of the Book of Jeremiah. It is not chronologically arranged. Much of it is undated. Most of it is narrative in style; in the narrative portion, however, the prophet sometimes speaks himself in the first person, and again, he is spoken of in the third person. Therefore, certain passages are more traceable to Jeremiah than are others. It is important to remember that the book was dictated (chapter 36). The poetry sections and the earlier prophecies we owe directly to Jeremiah's own dictation; this is fairly evident from the strong personal feeling which is so apparent.

The narrative sections where the prophet is spoken of in the third person come from someone who knew every detail of the life of Jeremiah, and can safely be attributed to the faithful scribe, Baruch (36:24). However, long after the time of Baruch even, the Book of Jeremiah still received additions. These often lessened the value of the book instead of enhancing it. Jeremiah himself was a very gifted poet, possessing unusual powers of emotional expression.

The following is an attempted rearrangement of the Book of Jeremiah upon a probable chronological basis:

ATTEMPTED
CHRONOLOG-
ICAL REAR-
RANGEMENT
OF THE CON-
TENTS OF THE
BOOK OF JER-
EMIAH

I. Reign of Josiah - 639-608 B.C.

A. Birth of Jeremiah - 650-645 B.C.

B. Call of Jeremiah - 626 B.C.

C. Deuteronomic Reform - 621 B.C.

D. Battle of Megiddo; death of Josiah - 608 B.C.

1. Call of Jeremiah: chapter 1

2. Call to repentance: chapters 2; 3; 4:1-4

3. The Scythian Invasion: chapters 4:5-31; 5:15-18;
6:1-8; 22-30

4. The Great Reform: chapters 11:1-8; 11:18-23;
12:1-6

5. Quiet Years at Jerusalem: chapters 16:1-9;
5:1-14; 5:19-31; 6:9-21; 8:4-8; 14: 15:1-4;
9:2-9

II. Reign of Jehoiakim - 608-597 B.C.

A. Jehoahaz' Reign (3 months) - 608 B.C.

B. Fall of Nineveh - 607 B.C.

C. Nebuchadrezzar - King of Babylon - 605 B.C.

D. Battle of Carchemish - 604 B.C.

E. Baruch writes Jeremiah's Prophecies - 604 B.C.

F. Jehoiakim's Rebellion - 598 B.C.

G. Death of Jehoiakim - 597 B.C.

1. The Battle of Megiddo: chapters 8:14-22; 9:1
2. Lament on the Death of Jehoahaz: chapters 22:10-12
3. Prophecy Against Jehoiakim: chapters 22:1-9; 22:13-19
4. Parable of the Girdle: chapter 13:1-17
5. Parable of the Potter: chapters 18; 19; 20:1-6
6. Conditions in Jerusalem: chapters 11:9-17
7. The Great Temple Sermon: chapters 11:15-16;
7:3-34; 26
8. The Nature of Sin: chapters 8:1-3; 9-13; 17:1-4
9. The Results of Evil: chapters 9:10-26; 10:17-25;
21:13-14; 13:15-17
10. Battle of Carchemish: chapter 46
11. Approaching doom of Jerusalem: chapter 25
12. Pronouncement Against the Nations: chapters 47; 48; 49
13. The Wages of Sin: chapter 13:20-27
14. Baruch's Call: chapter 45
15. The Writing of the Roll: chapter 36
16. Neighbors Plunder Jerusalem: chapter 12:7-17
17. The Rechabites: chapter 35
18. Jerusalem Helpless: chapter 22:20-23

19. A Curse on False Patriots: chapter 17:5-8

III. Reign of Zedekiah - 597-586 B.C.

A. The First Captivity - 597 B.C.

B. The Accession of Zedekiah - 597 B.C.

C. The Revolt of Zedekiah - 588 B.C.

D. Destruction of Jerusalem and Second Captivity - 586 B.C.

1. Dirge on Jehoiachin: chapters 13:18-19; 22:24-30

2. The Faithless Shepherds: chapter 23:1-8

3. The Baskets of Figs: chapter 24

4. Approaching Doom: chapter 16:10-21

5. Letter to the Exiles: chapter 29

6. Submission to the Yoke of Babylon: chapters 27; 28

7. Against False Prophets: chapter 23:9-40

8. The Doom of Babylon: chapter 51:59-64

9. The New Covenant: chapter 31:31-34

10. Capture of Jerusalem Foretold: chapter 21:1-10

11. Futility of Resistance to Babylon: chapter 34

12. Certainty of Jerusalem's Destruction: chapter 37

13. Jeremiah Purchases Property in Anathoth: chapters 32:
6-15; 32:24-26; 32:36-44

14. The Sin of the Heart: chapter 17:9-17

15. Jeremiah in Trouble: chapter 20:7-18

16. Promises of Restoration: chapter 33:1-9

17. Jeremiah in the Dungeon: chapter 38

18. A Promise to Ebed-melech: chapter 39:15-18

19. Capture of Jerusalem: chapter 39:1-14
20. Laments Over Jerusalem: chapters 15:5-12;
30: 12-15

IV. The Exile and After - 586 B.C. - - -

1. The Fate of Jerusalem: chapters 39:3, 14; 40:1-6
2. The Remnant Under Gedaliah: chapter 40:7-16
3. Songs of Hope: chapters 31:1-6; 31:15-30
4. The Murder of Gedaliah: chapter 41
5. The Flight into Egypt: chapters 42; 43
6. "Valedictory" of Jeremiah: chapter 44.

Chapter 52 is a historical appendix which is mainly an excerpt from the book of II Kings 24 and 25.

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

Jeremiah was born about the year 645 B.C. in the village of Anathoth, near Jerusalem. He came from a priestly family; possibly descending from

EARLY LIFE OF JEREMIAH Abiathar, the high priest of David and the last remaining heir of the old priesthood of Shiloh. Abiathar had been banished to the estate in Anathoth by Solomon. Religion surrounded Jeremiah from his youth up; his were the most cherished and prized traditions and realities of Israel.

"No other prophet is so steeped in the ancient literature and history of Israel. Everything that was noble and worthy in Israel was known and familiar to him. We see in this the fruits of a careful education, and can readily imagine how the priestly father or pious mother filled the impressionable heart of the child with what was most sacred to them." (1)

The conviction that Jeremiah was called to declare God's will to the people of Judah first came to him when he was very young. In fact, he

CALL OF JEREMIAH pleaded his youth when he saw what his "call" involved.

"Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child. But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah. Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck

(1) C. H. Cornill, The Prophets of Israel, p. 93.

up and to break down and to destroy and
to overthrow, to build and to plant."
--Jeremiah 1:4-10

Jeremiah received this call in the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign,

626 B.C. In speaking of this call Dr. John Skinner says: "We cannot but feel

that though this may have been Jeremiah's first vision of Yahwe it was not the beginning of his fellowship with Him. It is the consummation of a genuine religious experience, rooted probably in the pieties of home and early life, of a growing self-knowledge and knowledge of God, which now ripens into the consciousness of a special mission. It was an act not of self-discovery merely, but of self-surrender to a personal Being, who knows even before He is known, and chooses His servants before they choose Him. The sense of predestination in Jeremiah's consciousness means the conviction that the endowments of his whole nature, his physical and moral environment, all the influences of heredity and education that had shaped his life and made him what he was, had worked together under the hand of God to prepare him for the task to which he is now summoned. He is not to be a mere mouthpiece of the word of Yahwe, but a chosen vessel, fitted in every part of his being to be the medium of revelation to his fellow men." (1)

The whole life of Jeremiah was bound up in his calling, so much so that he felt he must deny himself even the joys of a home of his own; he belonged only to God and to his vocation.

Accompanying the call of Jeremiah were two experiences which left their permanent impression on the prophet; in his own words they were as follows:
(Jeremiah 1:11-19)

"Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond-tree. Then said Jehovah unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I watch over my word to perform

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

it. And the word of Jehovah came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a boiling caldron; and the face thereof is from the north. Then Jehovah said unto me, Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith Jehovah; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, in that they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at them, lest I dismay thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee."

In such a period of stress and strain Jeremiah received his call with fear and trembling. Judah, at this time, seemed to be threatened by an irruption of northern barbarians, known as the Scythians. The significant thing here is that Jeremiah was certain that Jehovah would not fail him! To the prophet it seemed that these hordes were instruments in God's hands to work his will. Thus Jeremiah was conscious of a distinct crisis in the life of his people when his call became clear to him. "Deeply attached to his country, he suffered as every patriot must suffer when woes come upon his fatherland. Compelled to announce the coming calamity, he was misunderstood, taken to be a traitor, arrested, humiliated, and plotted against. . . . Much as he shrank from the word laid upon him and from the suffering it entailed, yet he was steadfast to the end. His confidence in his God made him like a wall of iron or a

pillar of bronze, able to withstand the shocks and storms of time." (1)

Among the influential factors in Jeremiah's life was the thinking and teaching of his predecessor, Hosea. Hosea was the great prophetic figure in INFLUENCE Israel preceding its downfall and Jeremiah was the great spirit in OF HOSEA prophecy in Judah immediately preceding its destruction. These men of keen intellect and deep spiritual insight were men of warm emotion; both were intensely devout personalities; both revealed the same tender and sympathetic heart. Jeremiah had read and studied the teachings of Hosea; this is evident when we view the developing mind and spirit of Jeremiah as it is revealed in his prophecies. Skinner says of these two prophets (p. 22): "They are the two martyr prophets of the Old Testament, men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the most deeply exercised in spiritual religion of all the prophets of Israel."

Jeremiah had been preaching about five years when the nation was swept by the enthusiasm of Josiah and the Deuteronomic Reform. The nation had THE DEUTERONOMIC REFORM been subject to Assyria during the long reign of Manasseh and this political dependence had brought with it a recognition of Assyrian religion, several elements of which had been introduced into the temple at Jerusalem. Worship had become distinctly Canaanized and there existed the grave danger that the Hebrew's characteristic religion would lose its most vital qualities. When Josiah came to the throne he carried out the campaign known to us as the Deuteronomic Reform. This program was based on the book of Deuteronomy which had been discovered in the temple previously. Deuteronomy was an at-

(1) Henry P. Smith, The Religion of Israel, p. 164.

tempt to incorporate in the form of law and the spirit of Moses all that was best in prophetic teaching thus far. In the hands of Josiah and his supporters it was an attempt to rid Judah's religion of its Canaanite elements. Jewry was to become one united body by centralizing the worship at Jerusalem, destroying all the high places, and worshiping Jehovah only. This was sought to be brought about by the possession of a common religious literature and common ideals. It was a colossal attempt, based on noble motives, but it had several disastrous results.

At first, Jeremiah was for the Reform. It seemed to him that this might be the way to put into operation the ideals he felt sure that his people needed. Chapter 11 tells us that Jeremiah set about the task of proclaiming the merits of the law and its observance throughout all Judah. He met with difficulties. The experience left him the wiser in that it revealed to him the inadequacy of mere legislation without the inner motivation of a man's will to right action. His itinerary brought him back to Anathoth. His kinsmen and friends refused to hear him and they plotted definitely against his life (11:19). This experience deeply disillusioned the prophet and gave to Jeremiah the realization of the difficulties of the law as a measure of reaching the heart of the people. Jeremiah saw that something else was necessary. He does not, from now on, oppose the law but he is no longer an advocate of it. He begins to think along those lines which lead to the knowledge that the only worthwhile law is that written indelibly on human hearts. The people, however, did not feel that this was true. They became satisfied with the externalities of the law's fulfillments. Instead of stabilizing the work of the prophets the results of the

ATTITUDE OF
JEREMIAH TO-
WARD THE
REFORM

Deuteronomic Reform threatened to undo what they had achieved. Jeremiah saw the possibility of retrogression instead of permanent progress; he was disappointed with the spiritual fruits of the reformation. Thus Jeremiah was opposed on every side. He reluctantly became again the bearer of the message of destruction and doom. This made him unpopular, and he was driven in upon himself and back upon God. In all this bitterness Jeremiah learns to think deeply in the vital realities of the spirit.

"Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah; Shall men fall, and not rise up again? shall one turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold false deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? everyone turneth to his course, as a horse that rusheth headlong in the battle. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle-dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the law of Jehovah."

--Jeremiah 8:4-7

In spite of the danger and unpopularity to which Jeremiah was constantly subjected as he fearlessly proclaimed the sins and needs of his people, he kept right on with his denunciation. Clearer and clearer it was revealed to the prophet that the religion of the letter was inadequate, that this attitude must be supplanted by the religion of the spirit. In speaking of the passage quoted above, John Skinner says:

"The prophet is lost in amazement at the persistent impenitence of his people. When a man falls the next thing is he rises again; if he turn aside in his way he will turn back; but Israel seems to have learned the secret of perpetual relapse. The

prophet has listened in vain for any sign of misgiving or better thoughts: No man repents of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Their headlong career of wickedness is like the impetuous rush of a horse in battle, reckless of obstacles and consequences. Then follows the contrast of the migratory birds, those denizens of a purer air, which far as they wander are compelled by a mysterious law of their nature to return at the appointed season. Such is religion as Jeremiah conceived and experienced it. It is the instinct of the human soul for the divine, - an instinct which responds to the laws of the spiritual universe, and, unless perverted by evil habit, guides it unerringly to its true home in God. The people pride themselves on their possession of a written law; and when the prophet charges them with having no religion in their hearts, they retort that they have what is better, - they have it in a book! It is this illusion of infallibility and finality attaching to the written word, as if it were superior to the living voice of prophecy or the dictates of the religious sense, that Jeremiah seeks to dispel by the sweeping declaration that the true TORA of Yahwe has been falsified by the mischievous activity of the scribes." (8:8) (1)

After the death of Josiah and in the reign of Jehoiakim (608-597 B.C.) Jeremiah occupied a very important position. At this time the JEREMIAH'S favor of the court was no longer with the godly. Oppression, ACTIVITIES IN THE violence, luxury, exaction of forced labor, and indifference REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM marked the rule of the new king. All these evils are the subjects of Jeremiah's writings at this time. Priests and false prophets alike are exasperated by the very truth of the charges which he brings. With dramatic and artistic object sermons Jeremiah pleads with his hearers. In the temple upon a great feast day he brings the burden of his message (chapters 22 and 26). The prophet condemns the superficiality and unmerited confi-

(1) John Skinner, Op. cit., pp. 120-121.

dence on the part of the people's religion. The hearers are infuriated; they accuse him before the princes and people of disloyalty; they demand his death! Jeremiah makes his defense:

"Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Now therefore amend your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears."

--Jeremiah 26:12-15

Jeremiah is not put to death but he is regarded with constant suspicion and, therefore, remains somewhat in hiding after this. The prophet is FIRST denied the use of the Temple and so he resorts to writing as we CAPTIVITY have already seen. He continued to declare the signs of the times; he asserted, in opposition to those who still advocated alliance with Egypt against Babylon, that Babylon would surely prevail. In the meantime history was being made. Nineveh was captured by the Babylonians in 608 B.C. Part of the people of Judah were carried away captive at the end of the century. Jehoiachin reigned but three months (597 B.C.). At the end of that time the king yielded to Nebuchadrezzar's siege, and the king with the people and the treasures of the Temple and the king's house were taken to Babylon. The vacillating Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.) was the next successor on the throne of Judah (placed there by Nebuchadrezzar). Jeremiah was left in Judah with only the poorest of the land, but he continued with his task!

One day Jeremiah found himself in a potter's workshop. Here he watched the potter as he fashioned out of the clay different vessels just as he chose them to be. He saw that the potter sometimes failed; JEREMIAH AND THE POTTER then he would take the clay again and out of the misshapen vessel create a new and perfect vessel. Suddenly the analogy was revealed to Jeremiah as he pondered the fate of his own people.

"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter, saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel." 18:6

This passage has so often been misinterpreted. Perhaps Jeremiah had in mind much more than is usually discussed when this passage is used. Jehovah is not content with crushing the spoiled vessel; he begins again and fashions out of the ruin a new and "good" vessel. "We may believe that

the truth which dawned on him (Jeremiah) is that Israel is in the hands of an omnipotent and gracious God, whose inflexible justice compels Him to crush to the dust the pride of the old Israel - the 'worthless vessel' - but who will out of its ruin create a new people of God, formed for Himself to set forth His praise." (1)

Here is a new note of hope in the prophet's thinking. There would be pain and destruction in Judah, but then would come better days.

The tragic tale of Judah at this time is almost done. King Zedekiah, at times, refused to believe that an alliance with Egypt would not be

SECOND CAP- a good thing; he and his war party defied Babylon. Accord-
TIVITY AND
LAST DAYS OF ingly, Nebuchadrezzar besieged Jerusalem again and captured
JEREMIAH

(1) John Skinner, Op. cit., pp. 163-164

it in 586 B.C. The king's sons were put to death before his very eyes and then his own eyes were put out. The majority of the people were taken in captivity to Babylon. Jeremiah was rescued from the prison and dungeon where he had been cast by his enemies; he was urged to come to Babylon where he doubtlessly would have been well treated, living among the people he loved. It seemed the right thing, to the prophet, to go back to the remnant in Judah and there continue his teaching. Instead of choosing to live in honorable captivity in Babylon, Jeremiah chooses to remain in Jerusalem under the new governor, Gedaliah. But there was no peace; within two months later Gedaliah was murdered; many were slain, and many were imprisoned. Jeremiah was probably among the prisoners and ^{was} taken forcibly to Egypt. We have no notice of the prophet's death. Jeremiah, a man of peace and sensitive spirit, was forced to spend his days in strife. He loved his country deeply but was forced at every turn to oppose those who were in authority in his country. He deeply loved Jehovah, his God, but was often forced to see him mocked and defied. But the whole religious life of the world has been elevated because Jeremiah fearlessly followed the truth as God gave him to see it.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROPHET'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

A. JEREMIAH'S OWN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

JEREMIAH'S OWN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Jeremiah, like the other Hebrew prophets, did not choose himself for God's great task of righteousness; he had the distinct consciousness of

THE SENSE OF
DIVINE COM-
MISSION AS
FOUND IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT
PROPHETS

being chosen by God, in the face of his own protest and sense of unworthiness, to be His spokesman. "To them (the prophets) has come a divine moment when, as by a flash of light, they have beheld the mystery of life revealed, when, as by a sudden intuition, they have pierced to the reality of things, when their individual mind has stood face to face with the infinite, universal mind and realized itself the chosen instrument of God's purpose. This moment marks a new epoch in their existence; never again can their life be just as it has been. From this moment they are pledged to God's purpose - they have found their mission. Such spiritual experiences are not the fruit of an inert, passive mind, but of a mind consciously sounding the very depths of its being, a mind awakened to the fullest realization of its moral and spiritual constitution." (1)

This sense of being chosen constituted the call of the prophets. Jeremiah accepted this call because he felt with a marked sense of reality and Divine commission that God meant him to take upon himself this responsibility. He had been set aside even before his birth, he felt, to carry out, not his own purposes, but the demands and will of Yahweh. The prophet thought of himself as standing wholly on the side of God as the medium through whom He reveals His mind to His people.

In this consciousness of being an instrument in the hand of the

(1) Moses Battenwieser, The Prophets of Israel, p. 139.

Divine lies the secret of the unquenchable moral courage of the prophets of

THE PROPHETIC the Old Testament; this was no less true of the greatest of
CONSCIOUSNESS
OF JEREMIAH these prophets. "The prophets in the Bible and out of it

lose all sight of their private personalities and of their personal fortunes. They so identify themselves with the will of God, and become exclusive of all else, His spokesmen, that they have but one ambition: faithfully to reproduce the message that it has been given to them to declare. Thus, John Knox declared: 'I am in the place where it is demanded of my conscience that I speak the truth; and the truth I shall speak, impugn it who may.' Evidently, opposition of any kind, suffering or persecution of any kind, is practically meaningless to one who operates under such a sense of moral destiny as that. Nothing can silence him, and nothing can stop him." (1)

This stupendous consciousness, this sense of moral destiny Jeremiah received with vividness and depth at the occasion of his call and he

THE CALL OF never lost sight of it throughout his whole tragic and signifi-
JEREMIAH

cant career; it kept him loyal to the path of his goal and appointment. The soul of Jeremiah had been close to the heart of Yahweh and he had experienced Divine reality and certainty. Jeremiah conceived his mission to be to the nations. At the time of his call, the whole world seemed to be "boiling" with events about to happen. Accompanying the call of Jeremiah were two significant visions (these have already been related) which were characteristic both of Jeremiah and of the nature of the times. Just now, the Scythian hordes from the North, after having threatened the Medes, were sweeping over Western Asia to Egypt. Jeremiah's Scythian poems show an intimate familiarity with the habits of this nomadic tribe. The
SCYTHIAN
POEMS OF
JEREMIAH prophet sees in them the possibility of being the source of the

(1) Raymond Calkins, Jeremiah the Prophet, p. 57.

inevitable doom which Yahweh must send upon Israel because of her reckless sins. The first vision (that of the blossoming almond tree) gave Jeremiah the conviction that God was watchful and concerned over his word to perform it in a world that was asleep and lifeless. The two visions stand in direct contrast and yet they are, together, symbolic of the life of the prophet. All along, it was blossom and storm, calm and tempest, serenity and conflict, beauty and terror, tender pleadings for repentance and thunderings of doom. "Jeremiah was

no prophet of hope, but he was the prophet
of that without which hope is impossible -
faith in Control - that be the times dark
and confused as they may, and the world's
movements ruthless, ruinous and inevitable,
God yet watches and rules all to the fulfil-
ment of His will - though how we see not, nor
can any prophet tell us." (1)

And though the prediction of the Scythian destruction did not actually take place, the "caldron" from the North never ceased boiling out over the world of Jeremiah's day, ravaging his people with merited punishment, and finally clamping exile down upon them.

"Let the trumpet be blown in the land;
Loud be your call:
'Assemble and let us escape
To the cities with walls.'

Hoist ye the signal for Zion!
No time for delay!
For danger comes out of the North,
And Havoc untold.

A lion is roused from his lair,
A Spoiler of nations;
He is started, - gone forth from his haunts
To harry the earth.

(1) George Adam Smith, Jeremiah, p. 87.

Gird you with sackcloth for this;
 Lament and wail;
 For Yahwe's hot anger lies on us,
 And turns not away.

Behold, like clouds he comes up,
 His chariots a stormwind!
 Swifter than vultures his horses;
 Woe to us! We're undone.

O Jerusalem, wash thee from sin
 If thou would'st be saved:
 How long shall lodge in thy heart
 Thy dissolute thoughts?

Hark! a runner from Dan!
 A Herald of Evil from Ephraim's hills:
 Warn the people: Behold they come!
 Let Jerusalem hear!

From a far land leopards are coming,
 Against Judah's townships they roar;
 Like sleepless field-watchers they prowl around (?).
 * * * * *

My bowels, my bowels! O my pain!
 O walls of my heart!
 My soul is in tumult within;
 I cannot keep still,
 For the trumpet's din in my ears,
 The alarum of war.

Crash upon crash it comes -
 The ruin of all the land.
 Of a sudden my tent is ruined,
 In an instant my curtains.
 How long must I see the signal?
 The blaring trumpet hear?

I looked to the earth - and behold a chaos!
 To the heavens - and their light was gone.
 I looked to the hills - and lo, they quivered,
 And all the mountains shook.
 I looked - and behold, no man was there,
 And all the birds of heaven were flown.
 I looked to the cornland - and lo, a desert,
 And all its cities were rezed away.

From the noise of horsemen and bowmen
 All the land is in flight:
 They crawl into caverns, hide in the thickets,
 And scale the crags.
 Every town is deserted,
 None dwell therein.

And thou, spoiled one, what doest thou
 Dressing in scarlet,
 Flaunting in trinkets of gold,
 And enlarging thine eyes with paint?
 In vain thine adoring! The lewd lovers scorn thee,
 They seek thy life.

Hark! A shriek like a travailing woman's
 With her first child!
 'Tis the voice of the daughter of Zion, gasping,
 Stretching her hands, (and crying)
 'Woe is me! For my soul faints away
 At the feet of the slayers.'" (1)
 (Jeremiah 4:5b-8; 13-17; 19-21; 23-26; 29; 30-31.)

These early political intimations in the mind of Jeremiah developed into overmastering spiritual convictions. "We note at the outset," says

John Skinner, "that they are not the direct word of the Lord to Jeremiah, but the effect of that word on a sensitive human heart, which gives forth its own peculiar tones like the Aeolian harp when its strings are swept by the wind. The speaker is not Yahwe but the prophet himself; the identification of the human ego with the divine which is so characteristic of prophetic utterance finds no expression here.

 Like all true lyrics, the poems have their end in themselves, in the artistic utterance of personal emotion; and only in a secondary application do they become a medium of enlightenment or instruction or warning to others." (2)

Although the prophet was mistaken in his prediction that these particular

(1) John Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, pp. 35-37.

(2) Ibid., p. 46.

hordes from the North would bring destruction upon Jerusalem (for the Scythians passed by without harming Judah) he was right in that evil would come from the North. Later, the Babylonians instead of the Scythians were the actual source of doom. This partial failure, coming to Jeremiah at the beginning of his ministry, had a decided influence upon the prophet. Perhaps he was popularly discredited. Some scholars feel that he was silent for a while after this experience. At any rate, these poems are significant, first, in themselves, and secondly, because they aid us in tracing the mental and spiritual development of Jeremiah.

The essence of these early Scythian poems determined the whole trend of Jeremiah's moral development. In them he is at one with his people in suffering. Their afflictions are his afflictions. He identifies himself with the pain of his people and is willing to share the consequences of their misdoings with them. Jeremiah speaks with infinite tenderness and compassion, terror and alarm, in lyrical poetry of rare beauty. These poems give us a picture of the early revelation of the genius of the prophet. "They show the great depth of his emotional life; his capacity for moral indignation; his unerring estimate of the claims of the Divine Righteousness; his infinite sorrow for the fate of the people; and his ability to express all of these spiritual ideas in a poetical language of great lyrical force and feeling." (1)

John Skinner states further that Jeremiah's attitude toward the Scythian peril is illuminating "as a proof of the agitation into which his youthful

(1) Raymond Calkins, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

spirit was thrown by his first vivid presentment of divine judgment on his nation, and also as a revelation of the psychological process by which his prophetic intuitions took shape in his mind. Throughout his life the stream of lyric poetry which we strike here at the fountain head flowed steadily, though perhaps in diminishing volume, enriching the literature of Israel with some of its choicest strains. Through life also his inspiration frequently took the form of vision and audition though he learned that these conditions were not to be identified with standing in the council of the Lord and hearing His word. In Jeremiah the poet and the prophet are combined in a unique degree; and since 'character ripens more slowly than talent' it is not surprising if in his youth the poetic impulse seems to overshadow the prophetic. But a prophet he was at the very core of his being; and as he beat his music out he realised ever more clearly that his life was rooted in personal fellowship with the God who spoke to him and through him in his gift of lyrical utterance as well as in the direct revelation of His character and will." (1)

In the "Confessions" of Jeremiah we come face to face with those hours in his life when struggle and conflict rage in the prophet's mind. He

PERPLEXING is torn between loyalty to his great prophetic commission and
PARADOX IN the natural feelings and shrinking impulses of his own heart.
THE CON-
SCIOUSNESS Jeremiah knew from the beginning how difficult his task was to
OF
JEREMIAH be, but in the actual facing of those difficulties he often sank
to low depths of despair. Derided, mocked, cursed, hated, and misunderstood,
the prophet could not help but question "Why?".

"O Jehovah, thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. For as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry, Violence and destruction! because the word of Jehovah is made a reproach unto me, and a derision all

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

the day." (Jeremiah 20:7-8).

If Jeremiah had not become a prophet he would not now be the common laughing stock of all the people. God had induced him to become a prophet and then seemingly had left him to suffer all manner of reproach and insult at the hands of men. Thus Jeremiah is tempted with the thought of renouncing his prophetic responsibility. This made him more miserable, and deeply aggravated his mental and spiritual suffering. In the heart of Jeremiah was this paradox: he would be filled with joy upon receiving the word of Yahweh and then would do almost anything to escape delivering it to the people. But he finds that he cannot keep silent; he must speak Yahweh's word; he must be true to his God! "And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain."

(Jeremiah 20:9) In this verse the prophetic consciousness rises to its clearest expression in the Old Testament. Jeremiah has rightly been called the "primitive psychologist" among the prophets.

The prophets often picture for us the distinction between true and false prophecy, as they saw it. The false prophets are spoken of as work-

JEREMIAH'S IDEA OF TRUE PROPHECY RE- VEALED IN HIS CONTRAST OF TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS	ing for rewards; they are insincere and they lead the people astray. They do not possess genuine moral convictions and principles. They speak their own wills and desires and not the words of Yahweh. In Jeremiah 23:9-40 a picture of pro-
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phetic inspiration is clearly set forth. First, Jeremiah denounces the false prophets of the day for their immorality and their evil influence on the lives of the people.

"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah. They say continually unto them that despise me, Jehovah hath said, Ye shall have peace; and to everyone that walketh in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, No evil shall come upon you. For who hath stood in the council of Jehovah, that he should perceive and hear his word? who hath marked my word, and heard it? .

.

I sent not these prophets, yet they ran. I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

.
Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? . . .

. Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their vain boasting: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jehovah."

(Jeremiah 23:16-18; 21-22; 29; 31-32.)

The mark of a true prophet is one who has held converse and communion with God, says Jeremiah, one who has become possessed of His purpose and cannot keep from proclaiming that message to the world. Such a message comes through the medium of the moral consciousness, a harmonious relationship with the laws of the moral realm. God, who is not a far-off God but one who is near, present in man, is willing to reveal Himself. For Jeremiah, true revelation was the manifestation of the indwelling God within the human heart as a divine force, an inner fire, a hammer. Yahweh speaks mainly through His prophets but Jeremiah goes beyond this conception in saying that it is possible for God to speak to every individual soul which seeks him in earnest, to reveal Himself in the moral consciousness of every man. From this source the pro-

phets continuously drew power and strength, moral vision and moral energy; and Jeremiah possessed this prophetic insight and consciousness to a marked degree.

Israel settled down to peaceful pursuits and prosperity after the Scythian terror, which had darkened the opening years of Jeremiah's ministry, vanished as suddenly as it had appeared. Jeremiah finds the cause of the coming ruin and doom in the perversion of worship and the wholesale introduction of idolatrous rites. This seems to have been the direction of emphasis later followed by Josiah in his attempted reformation. A few leaders determined that the lesson of the recent crisis should not be lost and that the national life and national religion must be purged even by force, if necessary. The great immediate need of the hour seemed to be the purification of the cultus, the abolition of the heathenish rites introduced by Manasseh, and the teaching of true prophetic ideals regarding Yahweh's requirements of His worshipers.

It was at such a time as this that a law-book was discovered in the Temple. When it was read before King Josiah he was deeply concerned because the glaring disparity between the law-book's moral and religious requirements and the existing state of affairs was plainly evident to him. The elders were called together in a great national convention at Jerusalem at which time the newly found law was made the basis of public religion. A reformation was started in 621 B.C. that attempted to do away with everything that was incon-

sistent with the spirit of the law's requirements. The Temple was to be cleansed of all forms of idolatry. Thus it was the great objective of Deuteronomy (the law-book) to revive the fundamental principles of Mosaic religion, in accordance with the ideals of prophecy up to that time. The most characteristic feature of the spirit of Deuteronomy is the predominance of the moral over the greatly elaborated ceremonial element in it. "In all

its ruling ideas the book is evidently dependent on the prophecy of the eighth century, especially perhaps in its conception of Jahveh as supreme, not only in might, but in goodness and in truth. Jahveh is bound to His people by a relationship of love, and love is Israel's true response to the undeserved favour of God. In general, the influence of earlier prophecy is unmistakable. In its uncompromising monotheism and in its enactments as to the cultus it reflects the spirit and teaching of Amos and Hosea, Micah and Isaiah." (1)

Dr. John Skinner makes this significant statement: "The prophetic conceptions of God as a perfectly righteous and holy Being, and of religion as obedience to his moral will, found inadequate, but still sincere, expression under the form of the Covenant, with its conditional promises and threats, which is the embodiment of the Deuteronomic idea. And that a profoundly religious motive lay at the heart of the movement is shown by the impressive inculcation in the book of wholehearted loyalty to Yahwe, the only God whom Israel may serve, whose love to the fathers had called the people into existence, and whose gracious providence had endowed it with privileges such as no other nation enjoyed." (2)

In the minds of those who attempted to carry out the Deuteronomic

(1) R. L. Ottley, The Religion of Israel, p. 96.

(2) John Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 94.

Reform the only way of purifying the worship of Jehovah was to abolish all the local sanctuaries and to restrict worship and sacrifice to the Temple at Jerusalem, since the popular religion was the open door through which heathenism continually broke in upon Israel. We can imagine the resentment and dismay of the populace when they saw their holy places profaned and swept away, their priests reduced to poverty, and themselves denied access to Jehovah in the way their fathers had done. All objects connected with the worship of Baal were destroyed. The Temple itself was purged of the "Masseboth" and "Asherim"; all altars dedicated to the service of foreign deities were destroyed. The place which custom had given to the sacrifice of children to Moloch was defiled.

It was no slight revolution to degrade the traditional holy places, the meaning of which had become a part of the very life of the people. The Re-

SOME RESULTS OF THE DEUTERONOMIC REFORM

form struck a blow at the heart of the popular religion and outwardly accomplished many changes. But the roots of custom and hallowed associations were not so easily torn loose; these had sunk deeply into the heart of the people. However, as a consequence of the Deuteronomic Reform worship was centralized at Jerusalem. Through the efforts of Deuteronomy a legalistic emphasis entered Jewish religion, an emphasis which increased in curbing spontaneous and creative spiritual expression; later Judaism never lost this emphasis. A book was made the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. In setting matters of ritual above the living word of Jehovah, the Deuteronomic Reform became the occasion of a retrogression from the basic and spiritual ideals of prophecy. Deuteronomy served its purpose fairly well for

its own day, but it was not a measure for all time, and it had certain negative results. E. Sellin gives us an accurate and interesting evaluation of the efforts of the Deuteronomists when he says that "In making his

people bind themselves by an oath to obedience to Deuteronomy, Josiah caused the nation to take a long step forward on the path pointed out by the Elohist, a step on the road which led logically to Judaism. But it was, humanly speaking, the only way to deliver the people from the Canaanitish and Babylonian heathenism. And, regarded from a more comprehensive point of view, the introduction of this law may be regarded as at once the noblest and highest, and also, doubtless, the most tragic attempt which has ever been made to bring men to the Gospel by the road of the Law. Deuteronomy is penetrated through and through with prophetic ideas; God's love and love to God are its Alpha and Omega, ("And thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might", --Deuteronomy 6:5; "But because Jehovah loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he swore unto your fathers, hath Jehovah brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharoah, king of Egypt," 7:8.). But the vessel in which it was offered was to curdle the noble beverage which it contained. It was a necessity of the time, but to that time only did it belong." (1)

Jeremiah must have watched with grave concern the effect of the new and violent changes upon the religious temper of the nation. It is an

ATTITUDE OF JEREMIAH TOWARD THE DEUTERONOMIC REFORM	interesting question to ask what Jeremiah's attitude was at the time of the Deuteronomic Reform. This is a difficult problem and one on which the critics and scholars are divided.
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(1) E. Sellin, Introduction to the Old Testament, pp. 80-81.

Priests and prophets seemed united in the effort to bring this new movement to a successful issue. The first fact that strikes us is that Jeremiah's name does not appear on the list of the active promoters of the reformation. This does not give us the right to say, however, that Jeremiah was hostile to the reform, or unsympathetic with the whole project. Deuteronomy dealt with evils which Jeremiah himself had denounced. The reform was the strongest effort that had ever been made to bring the life of Israel into conformity with the will of God. "Its strongly ethical tone, its comparative depreciation of sacrifice, the spirit of humanity which pervaded its enactments, were all in close harmony with the traditional teachings of prophecy. Moreover, the book dealt a death-blow to the heathen practices which had corrupted the worship of Jahveh, and had so often led Judah into practical apostasy." (1)

The stern and rigorous method of reform stood in delineated contrast with the spirit of humaneness which is so characteristic of the social regulations of Deuteronomy. The merciless destruction of the idolater and the false prophet stands alongside the pleas for pity and consideration for widows, orphans, strangers, captives and slaves. It seems to me that it is reasonable to suppose that Jeremiah, at this time, in the early years of his ministry, thought that the Deuteronomic Reform might be the way by which his people would wend their way, eventually, to Jehovah. He may even have supported the movement.

"The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah,
 saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and
 speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhab-
 itants of Jerusalem; and say thou unto them,
 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Cursed

(1) R. L. Ottley, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; that I may establish the oath which I sware unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day. Then answered I, and said, Amen, O Jehovah. And Jehovah said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them." (11:1-6)

Perhaps Jeremiah undertook an itinerant mission throughout the cities of Judah in an attempt to advocate and inculcate the principles of Deuteronomy. The attack upon Jeremiah's life at Anathoth by his kinsmen shows that the prophet was probably in favor of the reform at first, and that his friends and elders met his enthusiasm with plots against his life, since Deuteronomy advocated the abolition of their local high places around which much sentiment and significance had grown up and at which, probably, some of Jeremiah's family had officiated.

It seems logical, then, to believe that Jeremiah was at first strongly in favor of the Deuteronomic Reform and that he gave to it his wholehearted support. Later, after bitter experiences, he regarded the method of legislation in the field of ideals with an attitude of distrust and aversion.

"Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah: Shall men fall, and not rise up again, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold false deceit, and they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake

not aright: no man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turneth to his course, as a horse that rusheth headlong in battle. Yea, the stork knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle-dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the law of Jehovah. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of Jehovah is with us? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely. (Jeremiah 8:4-8)

The fact that Jeremiah now opposed the reform does not negate the evidence that at an earlier date he may have held a different view - that of co-operation with the objectives of the Deuteronomic Reformation.

"He had looked on Deuteronomy as setting forth a high ideal of national life, and a means of accomplishing much needed reforms: in that sense it was to him a word of God; and he could say 'Amen' to the curse on him who refused to obey it. But to the people it became a fetish, and its possession a substitute for the inward knowledge of God which then and always was to Jeremiah the essence of religion. This is the error he is concerned to expose; and to do so it was not necessary that he should denounce the law root and branch as a product of human deceit and imposture. It was enough to assert that it had fallen into the hands of a professional class, whose interest it was to 'develop' its teaching in a direction which was foreign to its original spirit and purpose." (1)

This experience in the life of Jeremiah shows us a picture of the progress of a man's thinking, the revision of a man's judgment. He did not oppose the Law but he saw clearly that it was not enough. He saw that

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 105.

something more was necessary, but this was not all apparent to him at the very outset of his career. Jeremiah learned, in a first-hand manner, the accompanying defects and deficiencies of a national religion, with coercive measures backing it. He saw that it was impossible to convert the souls of men to ideals by the exercise of the authority and compulsion of the state. "It does not detract from the greatness of the prophet to think that his knowledge of religion was acquired gradually as a result of the experience and discipline of his life; and to my mind," says John Skinner, "his mental development is more intelligible if we assign an important place in that experience to reflexion on the working of the Deuteronomic covenant." (1) Jeremiah reached the place where he proclaimed that Yahweh's will can be better known through the living voice of prophecy than through the letter of a written law. With such a message the prophet was working toward the liberation of religion from the fetters of nationalism and institutionalism; this comes to be the great contribution of Jeremiah. He was deeply disappointed with the spiritual results of the reformation, and the later Jeremiah rose to the sublime heights of a law that is written on the hearts of men. This conception was made possible because of the value of the experience through which he had gone in making the discovery of the inadequacy of the law written only on tablets of stone or in a book and toward which the people felt no inward promptings to respond.

Jeremiah's itinerant journey in behalf of the Deuteronomic Reform included the village of his birth, Anathoth. Here he brought down

(1) Prophecy and Religion, p. 106.

upon himself the hatred and ill will of his own countrymen by advocating

THE CONFESSIONS OF the observance of the demands of Deuteronomy. At first he

JEREMIAH was not conscious of this unfriendly feeling; he did not

understand the enmity which he saw all around him. Then it was made

plain to him that they plotted against his life and the prophet was filled
with vehement resentment.

"And Jehovah said unto me, A conspiracy is
found among the men of Judah, and among the
inhabitants of Jerusalem.

.

And Jehovah gave me knowledge of it, and I
knew it: then thou showedst me their doings.
But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to
the slaughter; and I knew not that they had
devised devices against me, saying, Let us
destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and
let us cut him off from the land of the liv-
ing, that his name may be no more remembered.
But, O Jehovah of hosts, who judgest right-
eously, who triest the heart and the mind, I
shall see thy vengeance on them; for unto
thee have I revealed my cause. Therefore thus
saith Jehovah concerning the men of Anathoth,
that seek thy life, saying, Thou shalt not
prophesy in the name of Jehovah, that thou die
not by our hand; therefore thus saith Jehovah
of hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the
young men shall die by the sword; their sons
and their daughters shall die by famine; and
there shall be no remnant among them: for I
will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth,
even the year of their visitation." (1)

We could almost wish that these words had not been spoken by Jeremiah.

Some readers of the Book of Jeremiah explain them away by various means.

However, we cannot ignore a problem out of existence. Jeremiah, in anger

(1) 11:9; 18-23.

and bitterness of soul, voices his hurt feelings in this fashion. This passage presents us definitely with a Jeremiah who was not perfect but one who was human and thus more lovable. He should not have been so harsh, so vindictive. On the other hand, it is an easy thing to condemn the prophet, superficially. In his day, it seemed right to hate your enemies, and in his case the enemies were the enemies of the prophet of Yahweh and Jeremiah regarded them as enemies of Yahweh Himself. The prophet could not bear to have his God thus mocked and derided; it was hard to have the friends and relatives he had known persecute him even to the point of plotting against his life.

At this time and in later hours of persecution Jeremiah was frankly perplexed. He wondered why the wicked prosper and why the righteous suffer, and so he talked to God about it.

"Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, when I contend with thee; yet would I reason the cause with thee: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they at ease that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root; they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their heart. But thou, O Jehovah, knowest me: thou seest me, and triest my heart toward thee." (1)

"O Jehovah, thou knowest; remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered reproach.

 Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?" (2)

(1) 12:1-3a.

(2) 15:15; 18.

Such was the moodiness of Jeremiah as he pondered over his sufferings which he felt were unmerited. The prophet pours out his heart in a daring, bold, frank spirit. Jehovah's answer is increased testing and preparation, a royal summons to greater heroism of soul, a stern challenge to face the weary conflict with the forces of wrong.

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and though in a land of peace thou art secure, yet how wilt thou do in the pride of the Jordan?" (1)

"Therefore thus saith Jehovah, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." (2)

These passages reveal to us the very soul of the prophet.

They are parts of the devotional poems known as the "Confessions of Jeremiah."

JEREMIAH AND THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING In these confessional sections is unfolded the secret of Jeremiah's best self, the converse of his soul with God through which process and experience the true nature of religion was revealed to him. These confessions are distinctly characteristic of Jeremiah. Besides revealing the deeply spiritual nature of the prophet they also portray a great spiritual limitation on his part. This limitation is his spirit of vengeance upon his enemies. Jeremiah fails to grasp fully the teaching of Hosea that Jehovah is love. But he reveals himself to be a pioneer in wrestling

(1) 12:5.

(2) 15:19a.

with the problem of pain; he wrestles with Yahweh in his questionings and doubts. Jeremiah's very frankness with God, his questioning as to the rectitude of God's providence, is a testimony to the intimacy of Jeremiah with God. There welled up in the prophet that spring of inward devotion which sustained him all through his career. The suffering and persecution which Jeremiah had to face led him, eventually, to a closer and more personal relation with God.

The circumstances and incidents of the prophet's life reacted upon his intense and deeply spiritual nature and temperament, and we see him pouring out his soul to God, voicing his human misgivings, revealing his shrinkings from what he feels to be inevitable, and laying bare his deep despondency verging at times on despair.

"Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise. Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of Jehovah? let it come now. As for me I have not hastened from being a shepherd after thee; neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was before thy face. Be not a terror unto me: thou art my refuge in the day of evil. Let them be put to shame that persecute me, but let me not be put to shame; let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed; bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction." (1)

Again and again Jeremiah was driven into a mood of rebellion as he viewed his painful experiences and the persecutions to which he was subject. He

(1) 17:14-18.

The first of these is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The second is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The third is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data.

The fourth is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The fifth is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The sixth is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data.

The seventh is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The eighth is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The ninth is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The tenth is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data.

The eleventh is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data. The twelfth is the fact that the system is not a simple one; it is a complex one, and the complexity is not only in the nature of the system, but also in the nature of the data.

felt that God had not been fair in His dealings with him; he felt hurt enough and miserable enough to wish that he had not been born.

"Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which Jehovah overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear a cry in the morning, and shouting at noontime; because he slew me not from the womb; and so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb always great. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?" (1)

However, Jeremiah rises out of these moods into the realm of reassurance, faith, positive reasoning, spiritual strength, and inspiration after he has thus unburdened his heart to Jehovah. Although Jeremiah was hated and cursed by the whole nation, persecuted almost beyond the point of endurance, he did not become a prey to his resentment. "He was saved from permanent bitterness by those springs of loyalty and tenderness which lay at the root of his nature, and which no amount of persecution could dry up." (2) Through suffering, Jeremiah came to be surer of his mission, surer of God's purpose, and surer of His presence with him; he drew strength from his trials. This fact is no merit to the trials but rather to the way Jeremiah transcended his pain and the way he learned to live with it. The prophet shows us by his experience that suffering is not inconsistent with true fellowship with God, and that in the light of this fellowship there can be no complaint, no railing

(1) 20:14-18.

(2) Moses Battenwieser, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

out against divine justice and wisdom. Jeremiah rises from sincerely wishing that he might die to the genuine spirit of joy and gladness at the knowledge that he is the chosen servant of God.

More than the personal suffering of the prophet did the doom and punishment of his own people weigh down upon the heart of Jeremiah. He was an ardent lover of his country and of his people, and the fact that it was his commission to pronounce doom and death upon that land and that people caused him the deepest and most poignant pain and suffering. Jeremiah has too often been called merely "The weeping prophet"; he was much more than that, and the tears he did shed are redeemed in that he wept not for himself but because of the waywardness and stubbornness of his people whom doom must, therefore, inevitably overtake. It was this outward persecution, and not his personal suffering, that constituted the heaviest cross which Jeremiah had to bear. He was isolated from family and social life because the inescapable fate of his people burdened him and made him a lonely and misunderstood man. Jeremiah had a susceptible and deeply emotional nature, a sensitive, artistic and refined spirit. All events in the course of Judah's history impressed him profoundly, and the emotions thus stirred within him he speaks without reserve.

The subject of Jeremiah's prophecies is Judah's sin. This sin he explains as the nation's disregard of Yahweh and of his moral demands. To Jeremiah sin was an abnormal and unnatural thing. Because of the unfaithfulness and idolatry of Judah doom is inevitable. Both Judah's sin

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was the smell of the sea. It was a salty, fresh scent that I had never before. I had been told that the weather was perfect, and indeed it was. The sun was shining brightly, and the breeze was just what I needed.

I had heard that the beach was beautiful, and it was. The sand was soft and white, and the water was a deep, clear blue.

I had heard that the people were friendly, and they were. I had heard that the food was delicious, and it was.

I had heard that the view was amazing, and it was. I had heard that the music was great, and it was.

I had heard that the night was magical, and it was. I had heard that the stars were bright, and they were.

I had heard that the morning was peaceful, and it was. I had heard that the sun was warm, and it was.

I had heard that the day was perfect, and it was. I had heard that the life was good, and it was.

I had heard that the world was beautiful, and it was. I had heard that the love was true, and it was.

I had heard that the future was bright, and it was. I had heard that the past was sweet, and it was.

I had heard that the present was perfect, and it was. I had heard that the life was good, and it was.

I had heard that the world was beautiful, and it was. I had heard that the love was true, and it was.

I had heard that the future was bright, and it was. I had heard that the past was sweet, and it was.

I had heard that the present was perfect, and it was. I had heard that the life was good, and it was.

I had heard that the world was beautiful, and it was. I had heard that the love was true, and it was.

I had heard that the future was bright, and it was. I had heard that the past was sweet, and it was.

I had heard that the present was perfect, and it was. I had heard that the life was good, and it was.

I had heard that the world was beautiful, and it was. I had heard that the love was true, and it was.

I had heard that the future was bright, and it was. I had heard that the past was sweet, and it was.

I had heard that the present was perfect, and it was. I had heard that the life was good, and it was.

I had heard that the world was beautiful, and it was. I had heard that the love was true, and it was.

I had heard that the future was bright, and it was. I had heard that the past was sweet, and it was.

I had heard that the present was perfect, and it was. I had heard that the life was good, and it was.

and the judgment because of it are ever before Jeremiah. This judgment and punishment are merited, inextricably related to the sin of the people, states Jeremiah. Yahweh, in punishing the nation, operates through laws which naturally regulate the welfare of the nations. But in the heart of Jeremiah rages the conflict between the knowledge that Israel's doom is inevitable and deserved and the realization that he loves his country; between the voice of Yahweh and the impulses of his own heart. Again and again, in his earlier

JEREMIAH'S CALLS TO RE- PENTANCE AND PRONOUNCE- MENTS OF DOOM	prophecies Jeremiah, in pathetic tones of tenderness and affection, entreats his people to change their ways so that the approaching doom of the nation might be stayed.
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"For thus saith Jehovah to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to Jehovah, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn so that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." (1)

"O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thine evil thoughts lodge within thee?" (2)

"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place." (3)

"Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you." (4)

(1) 4:3-4.

(2) 4:14.

(3) 7:3.

(4) 26:13.

"It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." (1)

The prophet, however, sees his people go on their way, heedless of his every call to repentance and righteous living. He knows that his efforts to lead the nation into better ways are all in vain. He is met with cold indifference and even hostility; the more Jeremiah called to them, the more the people turned their backs on his counsel. In agony and despair, the highly sensitive nature of Jeremiah is overcome with emotion and feeling and he pours out bitter lamentations and complaints. A less loving and less sensitive ^{personality} would have suffered less; but Jeremiah, in genuine affection for his people, is grieved beyond words.

"The struggle within him was intense: on the one side, his lower, human self, naturally timid and shrinking, hardly able to bear up amid the trials in which he finds himself, and burdened by a thankless office which he would gladly have relinquished; on the other side, his higher self, Yahweh's voice and word within him, ever with irresistible power and constraining him to endure, fortifying him in his weakness, and encouraging him against despair." (2)

When Jeremiah saw that his people did not heed his pleas for repentance he pondered over the reason why such should be the case. He goes straight to the heart of the situation which is making them unable to realize the need of any return to Jehovah, of any spiritual change. The cause for this the prophet feels to be their radical inability to understand the true

(1) 36:3.

(2) S. R. Driver, The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, p. xxxviii.

nature of God.

"They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, will he return unto her again? Will not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again unto me, saith Jehovah.

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Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, She will return unto me; but she returned not." (1)

Here are tender notes of wooing, passionate heart-beats of disappointments because the people will not return. Here Jeremiah paints a picture of the seeking, yearning God. But He is rejected, says the prophet, and Yahweh cannot bless the people because they do not prepare themselves to receive Him by a sincere repentance of heart, thus recognizing what He is and what must, therefore, always be His demands.

"Until men know that Yahweh has a character which sets Him apart in lonely dignity, they will see no reason why He should not take His place among the other objects of their devotion
. Again, until men recognize that Yahweh has a character, which is not only His own, but which is the expression of His nature and therefore immutable, they will fail to recognize that He can only come to men who are prepared to meet Him along the lines of His demand. His demand does not consist in something which He chooses and may on occasion forego: it arises out of what He is and cannot but continue to be. To enter into relation to Him implies the acceptance of the conditions laid down in His nature. And this implies an allegiance absolute

(1) 3:1; 6b-7.

and unique like the character of Him to whom it is rendered. Religion to Jeremiah means submission to Yahweh on His own terms, and the terms are simply the expression of His nature." (1)

Jeremiah believed that Yahweh has a character which sets Him apart from everything else to which His people offered their sincere allegiance. Yahweh could claim nothing less than the whole-hearted adoration and sincere worship of His worshipers. In accepting and returning again to Yahweh, life would take on a new meaning for Israel; but this returning, this repentance on the part of Israel must be genuine and real.

The earnest pleas of the prophet Jeremiah, however, were in vain, as we have already stated. He is crushed by the realization that terrible destruction must overtake his people because they will not hear the words of Jehovah. Through his loneliness and despair Jeremiah reaches out to God in a deepened fellowship. His own reliance on God was too deeply rooted for him to give up in bitter dismay. The importance of his mission looms up before Jeremiah and he shakes off his weakness and despair as if it were apostasy. He cannot show himself unworthy of his calling by sinking into despondency. If he would lead people into an inner relationship with Yahweh he must himself be firmly grounded there, and Jeremiah learns that life's greatest boon for him is the fellowship with Jehovah.

"Therefore thus saith Jehovah, If thou return then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." (2)

(1) Adam C. Welch, Jeremiah His Time and His Work, p. 60.

(2) 15:19.

"He appears to realise that he had come near to forfeiting his office by losing its spirit, and that he needed a renewal of his vocation, a reinstatement in his mission, if he was to continue to act as a prophet of Yahwe. He learns, further, that the condition of victory over the world is victory over himself. He who had sat as a gold-refiner, testing the lives of the men around him and finding them to be refuse silver, now discovers that all is not pure gold within himself. He sees that he must separate between the noble and the base in his own mind. In the presence of God he recognises that there is something unworthy and ignoble in those human feelings to which he has given such free and fearless expression - his querulous complaints against providence, his impatience for the verification of his predictions, and especially his vindictive spirit toward his enemies. Thoughts like those he has uttered mar his communion with the pure and holy Being whose name has been named upon him, and unfit him for His service. Only as he cleanses himself from these lower impulses of his nature, and brings forth things noble and right, can he stand before Yahwe and speak as His mouthpiece to his fellowmen. Only so can he recover the joyous sense of God's favour which he 'had loved long since, and lost awhile', or be clothed with the strength that overcomes the world. He is made to feel that the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the truth that the pure in heart alone can see God, and that only through what is Godlike in man are God's mind and purpose discerned." (1)

Jeremiah felt God to be the searcher of the human heart. The prophet could not understand his own being but Jehovah penetrated and knew

SPIRITUAL- his inmost soul.

ITY OF

JEREMIAH "But thou, O Jehovah, knowest me; thou seest, and triest my heart toward thee." (2)

1. John Skinner, op. cit., pp. 214-215.

2. 12:3a.

"The heart is deceitful above all things,
and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can
know it? I, Jehovah, search the mind,
I try the heart, even to give every man
according to his ways, according to the
fruit of his doings." (1)

There raged an eternal conflict between the fidelity of Jeremiah to his prophetic commission and the natural feelings and shrinking impulses of his own heart. Jeremiah had found, through his own religious experience, that man is centered in God and that men find true happiness only by living in harmony with the Divine Being. In the mind of Jeremiah, this fellowship with Jehovah, this at-oneness with God, is the supreme end of all living, the only thing of significance, the source of needed spiritual strength. In Jeremiah we meet with the realization, on his part, of the power of the divine within the human heart, and the consciousness of constant communion and fellowship with God. It is this that marks a spiritualization of religion as an affair of the heart, as an affair between individuals and God in a degree which had not been so clearly reached before him. Jeremiah thus becomes the spiritual father of the Psalmists to whom we owe the deepest outpourings and devotions of the human heart to the Divine.

It is Jeremiah who first teaches us that prayer is conversation with God and that prayer is worship and communion. In the "confessions"

JEREMIAH AND he pours his heart out to a friend who hears him and answers
THE LIFE OF him. This bold and intimate speaking with God is a new note
PRAYER.

(1) 17:9-10.

in religion. The prophet spoke personally to Yahweh about his perplexity in the face of pain and unmerited suffering and persecution. Jeremiah prays for healing; he prays for help against his adversaries; and, he prays for vindication of the cause he represents. However, prayer was more than petition for Jeremiah; it was an intimate fellowship, converse and communing with God, in which not one thought is withheld from the Divine. His first efforts in prayer were intercessory and mediatorial in character, prayers for the nation whose doom he was compelled to pronounce. Later, Jeremiah felt such petitions to be more or less unavailing and he learned to pray for his own purification, that he, himself, might be in a right relation to Jehovah before he attempted to lead his people to more spiritual heights. Jeremiah's praying became an effort of his soul to bring every thought and feeling into harmony with the will of Yahweh. His prayers assume that high form of intimate and spiritual communion with God. Increasingly, religion came to be, for Jeremiah, a matter of personal and inward experience of God. In the outer world, Jeremiah saw only doom, disaster, destruction, but in this inner world of reality and individual experience of God's nearness, the prophet found hope, consolation, God! Jeremiah found religion to be essentially a matter of the spirit.

"Disowned by men and driven in upon himself, he found in the truth of his rejected prophecy an indissoluble link of communion between his own soul and God. Amid all his tribulations and the defeat of his lifework, it was a blessedness of which nothing could

rob him that Yahwe, the God of Israel, had spoken to him, and received him into His fellowship. And in this individual response to the voice of God he discovered an earnest of that instinctive and universal sense of the divine in which he recognised the permanent essence of religion." (1)

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 219.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROPHET'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

B. THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF

JEREMIAH

THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF JEREMIAH

The main problem of this thesis is the study of the development of the attitude of the prophet Jeremiah toward religion and its concepts, and his conception of God. Jeremiah teaches us not so much the nature of the attributes on which faith rests but rather does he reveal to us, with words and personal living, the effects of faith in man. All along we have tried to show how Jeremiah arrived at his various religious conceptions and attitudes. We have tried to picture the different moods he passed through, the thinking he engaged in, the mental and spiritual struggles he encountered. That, rather than any conclusions of our own drawn from that picture, represents the religion of Jeremiah. In this last chapter, however, the attempt will be made to portray the further development of Jeremiah's thinking along these lines as it seemed to reach its highest, clearest and most profound expression in three phases of the life of the prophet: his attitude toward ritual and sacrifice as revealed by the Temple Sermon; his attitude toward the institutions of religion and the essential nature of true religion (as he saw it) as it is revealed in his Letter to the Exiles; and thirdly, his teaching in the great "New Covenant" conception.

In the early years of the reign of Jehoiakim Jeremiah preached a sermon in the Temple. The contents of the sermon are given to us in chapter 7 and the results and consequences of it are told in chapter 26 of the Book of Jeremiah. Some years before Jeremiah delivered

STATEMENT OF
THE PURPOSE
OF THIS
CHAPTER

THE TEMPLE
SERMON

the Temple Sermon the Deuteronomic Reform had been carried on. Jehoiakim had continued the policy of his father Josiah in religious matters and the reform began to make its way, outwardly, into the habits of the people. Since worship had become centralized in Jerusalem, the Temple had taken on a new sanctity in the eyes of all Israel. The offering of sacrifices was looked upon with a sense of new value as a means of approach and access to God. There existed in the popular mind a materialistic and magical connection between Yahweh and the Temple - a superstitious reverence and awe. An empty formalism and ritual became the crutches upon which leaned a host of superficial worshippers. "The Temple became, even more than the Law-book, the talisman of the spurious piety that sprang up in the latter half of Josiah's reign; and although this was not wholly due to the influence of Deuteronomy, there can be no doubt that the enforcement of the law of the One Sanctuary was a powerful incentive to the popular delusion of its inherent sanctity." (1)

A distorted popular view of the teaching of Isaiah in regard to the indestructibility of the Temple in a given situation in his day also prevailed, and served as a consolation and hiding-place; the people made his teaching a concrete dogma and in it they blindly rested.

Jeremiah had plenty of opportunities to observe how the reform actually worked out in practice. Increasingly it became clear to him that true spiritual religion did not result when mere external methods such as the Deuteronomic Reform had set forth were used. The prophet saw men go to

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 165.

the Temple to make their sacrifices and then go away again, as sinful and material in their relationships as before. The prophet must have been thinking of the aims and the results of the Deuteronomic Reform when he went up to the Temple one day to one of the leading festivals. He stood in the crowded courtyard, an onlooker of the worship of the multitudes. Jeremiah is deeply stirred and he asks himself what the people mean by it all, in their hearts. The prophet wondered what impression this worship was making on Yahweh. Jeremiah felt that the people were substituting the temple worship for true devotion, and that they were actually aided in ignoring their sins by the painstaking diligence in their ritual observance. Instead of making nobler persons out of them this formalism was covering their moral failures with the contented cloak of an outer and external zeal. "Are these men so oblivious of the character of the Being whom they ignorantly worship as to imagine that the performance of sacrificial rites in a sacred place will answer His demands, or avert His wrath?" (1)

In preaching the Temple sermon Jeremiah took his life in his hands and boldly denounced the sin and insincerity of his people. He poured out upon them threats of merited punishment and doom. He went further by declaring that both the Temple and the city would be destroyed, that reverence for the house of God is no substitute for moral fidelity, and that the law has no validity unless its inner, ethical requirements are put into actual practice. "Men whose daily lives were a violation of every law of God presented themselves in the Temple, in the fond belief

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 168.

that its inherent sanctity ensured the stability of the social order within which they could practice their 'abominations' with impunity." (1)

"Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave unto your fathers, from of old even for evermore. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I caused my name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith Jehovah, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do unto the house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim." (2)

The message of the sermon is consistent with the spirit of Jeremiah in its passionate denunciation of the sacrificial cult and its wholesale rejection of a purely ritualistic and formal religion. Jeremiah declares that only the moral law implanted in the human heart

FALSE CONFIDENCE PLACED IN TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 175.

(2) 7:4-15.

is binding and authoritative. He tells the people that in the wilderness God commanded no laws regarding sacrifices.

"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concern-burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you." (1)

"Thus to stamp the nation's holiest beliefs as mockery and delusion required the penetration, the uncompromising character, and the boldness of a Jeremiah." (2) All Jeremiah has to say is directed against the temple and the false place it had been given in the thinking of his people. The prophet in the extreme statements of his polemic felt that if the temple and the whole system of sacrifices disappeared it might be better for the interests of true religion. Jeremiah makes the declaration that if the temple has become a symbol of a false religion, God is about to make an end of it along with the superficial nation which trusted in it.

Whether the prophets denounced the whole sacrificial system as such or only when it was made a substitute for obedience and righteousness is an interesting question. The condemnation of sacrifice as it was carried on in the sanctuaries of their day was a prominent note in the message of the prophets before Jeremiah - Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah.

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings,

(1) 7:21-23.

(2) Moses Battenwieser, op. cit., p. 23.

I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (1)

"For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." (2)

According to Isaiah the temple worship was blatantly incompatible with the character of the God the people professed to worship.

"What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (3)

And in Micah we find the prophetic point of view clearly stated - and no mention of the necessity of sacrifice is made at all:

"Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the

(1) Amos 5:21-25.

(2) Hosea 6:6.

(3) Isaiah 1:11-15.

fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;
 and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but
 to do justly, and to love kindness, and to
 walk humbly with thy God?" (1)

From these excerpts from the forerunners of Jeremiah the opposition between the prophetic and the popular conception of religion is very

ATTITUDE OF apparent. And from the discussion of the Temple Sermon
 JEREMIAH TO-
 WARD SACRI- preached by Jeremiah we know how he felt toward the sacri-
 FICE ficial system. The sacrifice of animals was universally
 regarded as a necessary means of approach to Yahweh in order to secure His
 favor. Sacrifice was regarded as the vital part of religion.

"Ancient worship culminated in animal sacrifice, and apart from sacrificial worship religion could not exist. Sacrifice was the chief and indispensable means of maintaining intercourse between God and man. The bond uniting the deity and his worshipers was conceived as a physical one, and nothing was needed to keep it intact save the due observance of the stated ritual. Morality might be important, and transgressions of the divinely appointed order might be punished by judgments more or less severe; but the threatened breach could always be healed, and the anger of the god appeased, by enhanced zeal in the performance of sacrificial rites. Hence they (the people) concluded that though Yahwe had a regard for morality, he must have a still greater regard for His own honour, and would never *press* His demand for righteousness so far as to abandon the nation which did formal homage to His divinity. And this, which to the popular view was incredible, is precisely what the prophets maintained that Yahwe was about to do." (2)

It seems that the position of Jeremiah is clearly this: that sacrifice has no validity as a substitute for obedience and righteousness; and, more than this, that a perfect religious relationship with God is possible without

(1) Micah 6:6-8.

(2) John Skinner, op. cit., pp. 180-181.

sacrifice at all. He is convinced that sacrifice is not essential to true religion; it is no necessary term of communion between Yahweh and Israel. The fulfilment of the ethical commands of God is of greater importance and concern to Jeremiah. Such a view of the popular practice of sacrifice in the Temple is not necessarily in disagreement with the view that Jeremiah was at first in favor of the aims of Deuteronomy. Jeremiah saw the weakness of the reform movement, and when the Temple and ritual were regarded as the essence of religion he denounced this attitude with fervor. "His words strike at the root of the common illusion which regarded sacrifice as an essential constituent of the worship of Yahwe, and when he asserts that God had given no law about it at the beginning he must mean that such laws, whether found in Deuteronomy or anywhere else, were unauthorised additions to the covenant made with the fathers." (1)

After such a sermon it stands to reason that Jeremiah was not safe with the priests and the rank and file of the prophets, nor with the people of the assembled throng. His prediction that the Temple would be destroyed caused an uproar. Jeremiah was declared to be worthy of death. The prophet, speaking in his defence, announces that God had sent him to prophesy against the temple and the city. He urges the people to heed Yahweh's word and not to add to their sin by killing him, an innocent man and a prophet of God. We know that Jeremiah escaped without hurt or harm. For our purposes here the thing of vital importance is the fact that Jeremiah mercilessly attacked what the people felt to be their holiest beliefs and insti-

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 183.

tutions. He regarded their false confidences as mockery and delusion - their worship as hollow and unreal. Jeremiah states the sublime truth of the spirituality of true religion, which must spring spontaneously from the contact of the human spirit with the living God. This spiritual and inner relationship cannot be coerced; it cannot be legislated into the lives of people; it must spring from an intimate communing relationship between God and the individual worshiper. Yahweh prefers obedience to sacrifice, right standards of living to mere ritual and formalism. Hypocrisy can have no place in the dealing of any soul with God; there must be only genuine fellowship with a real moral deity, and whatever hindered that in any way must be ruled out.

The Jerusalem captives in Babylon were evidently permitted to live apart from the Babylonians. They retained their identity and a certain measure of their former organized life. We know that JEREMIAH'S LETTER TO THE EXILES letters and messages were sent back and forth between Babylon and Jerusalem. This community of exiles presented a real problem to the thinking religious minds of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's day. Could any real relationship with Yahweh be kept up in a foreign land? The question had never arisen before. Their worship had always been carried on in Palestine where existed the Temple at Jerusalem, the place to worship, the place where Yahweh dwelt. "Men could not enter into full relation to the God of the Covenant except by sacrifice and festival, and this worship could only be offered at the temple in Jerusalem. The exiles, through the mere force of circumstance, were being robbed not only of their fatherland, but of

their God." (1) In the thinking of the Hebrews of that day the defeat of Yahweh's people and the destruction of His Temple could only mean that there existed other gods who were stronger than the God of Israel.

These problems were bravely faced by Jeremiah and we have his conclusions revealed in his Letter to the Exiles (chapter 29), which portrays an unbroken will and indomitable spirit in the midst of disaster - moral courage in the presence of chaos and fear. Jeremiah is very sure that the future of Israel lay with the exiles in Babylon. He felt that their stay there was not to be a short one, contrary to the belief the exiles themselves held. The exiles, believing that they could not rightly worship God except at Jerusalem, felt that to remain loyal to their religion they must speedily return to Palestine. The teaching of Deuteronomy, implicit in the popular conception of it, was making every conscientious Israelite a bad citizen in the land of exile. Jeremiah believed that the exiles must remain in Babylon until they had learned all that Yahweh meant to teach them by this tragic experience. In his letter he bids the exiles to settle down in their new home, to marry and bring up their families. The prophet counsels them to live at peace with Babylon in order to insure their safety. Jeremiah urges the exiles to have patience and courage, to accept their new condition, and to cherish hopes for the day when Yahweh will restore Israel.

"Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and
plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.
Take ye wives and beget sons and daughters;

(1) Adam C. Welch, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters: and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." (1)

A greater message in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles is his pronouncement of assurance that Yahweh is as near to the devout Israelite in exile as He is to those remaining in Jerusalem. Jeremiah declares that the essence of religion is not dependent upon residence in Palestine, and that it can even be engaged in alongside loyalty to a foreign power.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end. And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." (2)

The exiles still have a share in the gracious purpose of God, writes Jeremiah. They have as real access to God through prayer as if they were worshipping in the temple at Jerusalem. Jeremiah makes it clear that, if the

(1) 29:5-7.

(2) 29:11-14.

exiles are willing, the painful experience of exile can mean more than just the wreck of men's hopes; it can mean the destruction of false hopes, the freeing of their souls from all fetters that bind. In exile, they have the opportunity of learning that true worship can be carried on without the temple and the city of Jerusalem. If the exiles pray to God in Babylon He will hear them there. "The true faith was capable of being maintained under an alien sky." (1)

This conception marks a profound transition in the minds of the leaders of Israel in regard to the relation between God and His people. Jeremiah virtually declares that religion is essentially independent of every institution, and that religion abounds wherever worshiping Israelites seek earnestly to find God with their whole heart. God is not bound to a certain land, a temple, a set sacrificial system, or priesthood. Yahweh can be found anywhere by sincere seeking hearts because He is a great God, too great to be bound only to one land. The thoughts He thinks toward His people are gracious and kindly thoughts.

"It was always possible for men to live in dependence on Yahweh, and when they did it they received or would receive from Him all that was necessary for their real life. In the greatness of this possibility Jeremiah asked his fellow-countrymen to endure the loss of their city and their independence, he asked the exiles in Babylon to endure the loss of their fatherland, he asked the men of Jerusalem to endure the vision of their wrecked temple. None of these things, however dear and great, was essential. Though they lost them all, they had not lost their God, and having Him they held also all which He might count necessary for their full life. It was an amazing demand." (2)

(1) Adam C. Welch, op. cit., p. 178.

(2) Ibid., pp. 233-234.

This is a bold and complete liberation of the spirit of true religion from the molds of national worship. This profound spiritual principle, that true religion is possible anywhere, is latent in the teaching of the prophets but in him it becomes real and explicit. Amos with his emphasis upon righteousness and justice, Hosea with his stress upon love in the nature of God, and Isaiah and the Deuteronomists with their emphasis upon holiness have all laid foundation stones on which Jeremiah built. And on the structure which Jeremiah erected Ezekiel (?), Deutero-Isaiah and Jesus builded to still higher heights of spirituality. It was because Jeremiah himself had known the power of prayer, and the answer to prayer, as a personal experience that he was able to discover in himself the foundations of individual piety. He was thus able to assure his fellow-countrymen in exile that God was as near to them as to those in Jerusalem.

The prophets, including Jeremiah himself at first, dealt with the people and nation as a moral unity; not to the complete exclusion of any consideration for individuals as such but they were concerned about the people as a whole. Israel was the object of Divine affection; Yahweh had sought, delivered, and cared for her as a nation. As a unit of national existence the people had strayed from Yahweh and had proved themselves false in their relationship with Him. In Jeremiah's day worship was the business of the nation. The prophet's first calls to repentance are of a public and general nature. When the people do not heed these calls

Jeremiah pronounces doom in the form of national and political break-up. Increasingly, however, Jeremiah's concern is with the individual. In his own experience he had found the thing of highest significance to be the immediate relation of the individual to God. Clearly he has revealed the way God works in the soul of man, and how He searches the heart and knows men, (11:20; 17:9-10; 23:24).

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in
Jehovah, and whose trust Jehovah is.
For he shall be as a tree planted by
the waters, that spreadeth out its roots
by the river, and shall not fear when heat
cometh, but its leaf shall be green; and
shall not be careful in the year of drought,
neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (1)

G. A. Smith says of this passage: "The individual soul rooted in faith and drawing life from the Fountain of Living Water, independent of all disaster to the nation and famine on earth - could not be more beautifully drawn."

We come, then, in our study to the consideration of the New Covenant passage in the Book of Jeremiah (31:31-34). The authenticity of this passage is a subject on which there exists much difference of opinion. The place which the passage occupies seems to be the greatest difficulty in attributing it to Jeremiah; however, a later editor's rearrangement could be responsible for that. But the question is a vital one; does the New Covenant passage come from Jeremiah? "Thus we may read into the words a view of religion so profoundly spiritual and personal that it is hardly conceivable that any one else than Jeremiah

(1) 17:7-8.

could have written them. On the other hand they may be interpreted in a trivial and formal sense which would stamp them unmistakably as the composition of a late Jewish legalist." (1) John Skinner, in his critical analysis of the problem, views the disputed passage as consistent with the spirit and temper of Jeremiah and, therefore, in all probability coming from him. I think that is a reasonable view; Jeremiah had taught that religion consists of the individual's direct knowledge of and fellowship with Yahweh (9:24), and that it was His will to give His people a new heart to know Him.

"And I will give them a heart to know me,
that I am Jehovah: and they shall be my
people, and I will be their God; for they
shall return unto me with their whole heart." (2)

Jeremiah's disappointment with the results of the Deuteronomic Reform and the national religion based on a law written in a book could logically, I think, lead to a covenant conception, conceived of in purely spiritual terms, as a new and inward religious relationship of individuals with God. Jeremiah did not labor under any illusions as to the results of Deuteronomy; he saw that it was not enough.

The spiritual enlightenment of the individual mind, the forgiveness of sin, and the doing of the will of God from a spontaneous, inner

SIGNIFI- CANCE OF THE NEW COVENANT CONCEPTION	prompting of a renewed heart, are the profound thoughts in this spiritual conception of the New Covenant. The idea of a covenant existing between Jehovah and his people Israel
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(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 320.

(2) 24:7.

was an established one among the ancient Hebrews. God had promised to do certain things for Israel if they performed His requirements. These requirements were too often thought of in an external nature; they dealt with outward form and ceremony, ritual, and sacrifice. Jeremiah had seen the old covenant break down. He had seen the dismal failure and futility of a law that was written merely on tablets of stone, and for which the people felt no inner enthusiasm and conviction. Religion in the minds of the masses of people had become degraded, demoralized, and deeply connected with externalities. Jeremiah saw that you cannot reform a people with a law written on stone or in a book. He realized that the old covenant was of no avail and that the people failed to make real in their lives the great prophetic truths of Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. If there is to be true religion, true piety there must be written on the heart the law of Jehovah. God would make a new covenant with his people, Israel; He would write the law on the hearts of his people.

"Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know

Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." 31:31-34.

Jeremiah thus stressed the inwardness of religion. True religion needed the spiritual illumination of the individual mind and conscience. The INWARDNESS OF RELIGION fulfilment of the demands of this new covenant would result from the spontaneous impulse of the renewed heart. The prophet has led us a long way toward the heights of understanding the nature of true religion, and while on the journey with him he has become endeared to us, and we have learned to appreciate him for those sterling qualities which have made him truly great.

"The vision of an ideal community with a right mind towards God he (Jeremiah) held in common with all the prophets, and like them he conceived it as a restored and purified Israel. His peculiar contribution to the prophetic hope is the thought of a direct action of God on the heart of each Israelite, bringing it into harmony with His own character and will. He may not have seen that this thought must burst the bond of nationality, and be fulfilled in an invisible fellowship of spirits based on that knowledge of God which he knew to be the ultimate reality of religion. But in projecting his own personal experience into the future as the form which true religion must assume universally, he threw a bright beam of light across the ages; and it falls at last on One who is the Yea and the Amen to all the promises of God - on Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Author of eternal salvation." (1)

The New Covenant conception is a picture of an entire community

(1) John Skinner, op. cit., p. 334.

actuated by God's law, living in conformity with His will. Every member, knowing what Yahweh requires, regulates his thoughts and words and deeds accordingly. God is thus theirs, and the people are His. Sin has no more power over them; their former guilt has been forgiven and will no more be remembered. Perhaps it is a limitation on the part of Jeremiah not to tell us how this is to be brought about; but he gives us a great hope. It was an advance, too, in prophecy for, in the first place, it was a bold decision to intimate that the old covenant had failed. In the second place, it was a revelation of high religious genius and profound inspiration to glimpse a spiritual covenant made with the inner man, issuing in a universal knowledge of God. Divine forgiveness and forgetfulness of sin are to be a part of this covenant. Only one spoke with greater and sublimer authority than Jeremiah: "Moses said. . . . but I say unto you," and "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

A study such as this makes radiantly certain the conviction that Jeremiah was an interpreter of God, that he was a servant of Jehovah, JEREMIAH, revealing His message to the people. All the prophets had this AN INTER- consciousness and Jeremiah possessed it to a marked degree. JER- PRETER OF GOD emiah was the spiritual heir of Hosea. The advance made by Jeremiah consists not so much in the formulation of a new doctrine about God as it consists of the transformation of the very conception of religion in its fundamental nature. This advance can best be ascertained by a sympathetic study of the personality of Jeremiah since he was himself his greatest message, and his supreme contributions are deeply rooted in his own experience; this has been our attempt. If, in some ways, Jeremiah does not add to the great contributions of his famous predecessors, he still stands out as first

among them all because all that he inherited he deepened, transformed, and made more inward in significance. In his daring anticipation of the New Covenant he made the supreme advance in that he conceived the unit of religion to be the individual rather than the nation or the family. The individual's relation to God is to be direct, immediate, personal; each person is for himself the object of Yahweh's care and concern and spiritual illumination. This conception had its birth in Jeremiah's own experience. In the Book of Jeremiah we are impressed with an intimacy with God which is a new note in the religion of the Hebrews. He was driven to this fellowship with God by the failure of human friendship and his disappointments in the people to whom he had been sent as a prophet. "Lonely and misunderstood, despised, forsaken, and hated, he was driven to cast himself and all the weight of his cares and sorrows upon God. In such intimacy of personal fellowship he realizes that he has discovered the religious ideal. He looks forward to a time when what has come to be a necessity for himself will be shared by all the people of God." (1) The experience of a direct and personal fellowship with God enabled Jeremiah to be the pioneer of a new individualism.

Religion, to Jeremiah, was the knowledge of God; it was an individual, inner heart experience. And the prophet firmly believed in the	
JEREMIAH'S IDEA	universality of that experience, which must always be a
OF THE NATURE	
OF GOD AND RE-	vital, living relationship with Yahweh. God is a personal,
LIGION	
	spiritual presence and friend. Jeremiah confronts God

(1) A. S. Peake, The People and the Book, pp. 280-281.

face to face; he is bold and daring in his prayers to Him, not hesitating to expostulate, show disappointment, or register bitter reproach. But he learned through this, to know God personally, and it was this that he coveted for his people. Perhaps one of the reasons why Jeremiah turned against Deuteronomy was that he had reached a new conception of God and he saw the inconsistencies between the attempt at legislation and the requirements of a spiritual Being. The eighth century prophets were practical monotheists; they assumed for practical purposes that God ruled the universe, but they did not try to explain why this was true. Jeremiah, says George A. Barton in his History of the Hebrew People (p. 296), was the first to explain why this was so. He denied existence to the heathen gods. Idolatry, in the thinking of Jeremiah, was sacrilege and folly.

"Every man is become brutish and is without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, a work of delusion: in the time of their visitation they shall perish." (1)

"Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O Jehovah our God? therefore we will wait for thee: for thou hast made all these things." (2)

The disloyalty of Israel, in the mind of Jeremiah, demanded an explanation. It seemed to the prophet that it was because God was what He was and demanded what He did that Israel chose an easier and less exacting way, the way of idolatry. Jeremiah considered it sheer folly; to him it was

(1) 10:14-15.

(2) 14:22.

to leave a fresh spring and dig cisterns, incapable of holding water.

"For my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me, the fountain of
living waters, and hewed them out cisterns,
broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (1)

"It is when men realize that love means more
than privilege that they begin to rebel.
When Israel realized that Yahweh had a yoke,
that He imposed standards and required sub-
mission, it forsook Him for the easier re-
ligions of heathenism. Out of His mere grace
Yahweh had chosen the nation and given it His
name. Through the new sense of unity and self-
confidence which the common faith had brought,
it had won Palestine and nationhood. Every-
thing which Israel possessed had come from its
faith. But the grace which gave much asked
much: it demanded self-surrender. And without
self-surrender on the part of those who re-
ceived it, grace became an empty word. No
other nation changed its god, nonentity though
that was. The reason for the constancy was
that it all meant so little. There was no
cause to forsake such gods, because it in-
volved so little to follow them. Israel for-
sook Yahweh, because the relation to Him was
full of ethical content.
. (But) the people preferred to
make gods for themselves, gods which could lay on
no yoke and set no standards, because they were
ultimately the reflection of men's own desires." (2)

Therefore, Israel must repent, teaches Jeremiah, and he holds before the
people a God who demands repentance but One who forgives sin freely and
will take back, into a more intimate fellowship, all who desire Him. Jere-
miah believed that God had revealed Himself to His people and had chosen
them to be His servants, but this relationship rested upon an ethical basis,

(1) 2:13.

(2) Adam C. Welch, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

upon repentance, upon regenerated hearts, upon a New Covenant between Jehovah and His people. God could hear the prayers of men wherever they prayed and did His bidding. This new spiritual relationship between God and Israel is not dependent upon outward conditions and circumstances; this worship could go on without the Ark, without the Temple, without the city of Jerusalem - God and each individual plus prayer and obedience are all that are necessary; everything else is secondary and accessory in character.

"Yet Jeremiah was no cosmopolitan with a new-found creed which was to obliterate and take the place of the old. To him God was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who had made Himself known to Jacob, His acts to the children of Israel. He knew that it was this God, whom he had learned to know and reverence in the pieties of his home at Anathoth, who had called and equipped him to be a prophet to the nations. God had made known His mind to Moses, and the prophet stood consciously in the succession of that initial revelation. He could not depart from it, and would not if he could. Yahweh had called Israel out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness into Palestine. Unless He had done this, there would have been no Anathoth and no prophet with a message and a commission." (1)

A corollary of this belief that God is one God was the belief, on the part of Jeremiah, that God cares for all repentant nations.

"O Jehovah, my strength, and my stronghold, and my refuge in the day of affliction, unto thee shall the nations come from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Our fathers have inherited nought but lies, even vanity and things wherein there is no profit." (2)

(1) Adam C. Welch, op. cit., p. 192.

(2) 16:19.

In all these thoughts of the prophet Jeremiah about God he rounds out the work of the prophets before him and anticipates the final and complete ethical and universal monotheism of the later prophets. Jeremiah started with the belief in a personal God, whom he called by various names. Those names especially peculiar to Jeremiah are: "Fountain of Living Waters", (2:13); "Hope of Israel and Saviour Thereof in Time of Trouble", (14:8); "Loyal-in-love", (3:12 and 17:13). Personality was always an element in Jeremiah's thinking about God as it had been in the minds of the prophets before him. Unity and spirituality were attributed to Jehovah. His personality was thought of as a moral personality. His character was reflected in the demands of the conscience, the inner man. In the thought of Jeremiah God is active and effective in guiding His people in history. He watches over His word, in a world needing what He can give, to perform it (1:12). The prophet distinguishes Yahweh from other gods that are not gods at all:

"Hath a nation changed its gods, which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." (1)

"Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people from a land that is very far off: Is not Jehovah in Zion? is not her King in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with foreign vanities?" (2)

"For my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to false gods; and they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, in a way not cast up." (3)

God, too, is a loving God, who bears more pain in His heart than anger over

(1) 2:11.

(2) 8:19.

(3) 18:15.

the punishment of Israel:

"Thus saith Jehovah, What unrighteousness have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" (1)

"O generation, see ye the word of Jehovah. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? or a land of thick darkness? wherefore say my people, We are broken loose; we will come no more unto thee? Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number." (2)

"Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a darling child? for as often as I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart yearneth for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith Jehovah." (3)

This same God is a God of righteousness demanding repentance and pleading with His people to return to Him. "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah." (4) Jeremiah's view of God showed life to the prophet in a new perspective. That is why he was able to see the emptiness of the ceremonial religion, and reach out to higher and nobler spiritual goals for his people. The whole record of Jeremiah's life is proof of this fact.

"And sure it is that the personal piety which henceforth flourished in Israel as it had never flourished before, weaving its delicate tendrils about the ruins of the state, the city and the altar, and (as the Psalms show) blooming behind the shelter of the Law like a garden of lilies within a fence of thorns, sprang from

- (1) 2:5.
- (2) 2:31-32.
- (3) 31:20.
- (4) 9:24.

seeds in Jeremiah's heart, and was watered by his tears and the sweat of his spiritual agonies." (1)

Such, then, is the thinking of the prophet Jeremiah about God and religion. His vocation, from the very first, marked out for him a stern life of conflict and struggle. This struggle and bitter strife troubled him keenly, and he often found himself longing for peace and freedom from his terrific responsibility. But Jeremiah conquers these moods and we know him as a man of amazing courage and insight, rebuking the sins of his people and pleading with them again and again to turn their hearts back to Yahweh. The richness of his nature and his genuine understanding of man's inner motives enabled him to see ahead to the necessity and possibility of a New Covenant between Yahweh and His people, a real spiritual and individual relationship existing between the God of Israel and every sincere worshiper. Through the fidelity of Jeremiah in the midst of a wrecked nation he helped prepare for a larger and finer relationship with Yahweh for himself and for future generations.

1. G. A. Smith, op. cit., pp. 373-374.

It has often been said that in the person of Jeremiah we reach the peak of prophecy; from the above study it has been easy for

JEREMIAH me to believe that statement. With Jeremiah, "a singularly
 SET RE-
 LIGION lovable man", personal piety becomes an established reality.
 ON A
 PURELY His teaching quite naturally rests upon that of his predeces-
 SPIRITUAL
 BASIS sors; it is organically related to their achievements. But

we can truthfully say of Jeremiah that he deepened and spiritualized Israel's prophetic qualities, and transformed them to a higher key. Jeremiah was the first consciously to set religion on a purely spiritual basis, free from all extraneous elements, in a direct and personal relationship with God.

The work of Jeremiah is of paramount importance in the transition of the conception of religion as a national experience to the conception of religion as primarily a thing of the heart. Every Jew felt that the Ark, the Temple, and the Nation were vitally necessary and essential to religion. Jeremiah watched his fellowmen as they came to the temple to worship and offer their sacrifices. He saw that they were the same men that they were before worshipping. Their religion left no influence on their conduct. The prophet saw that religion is not external; he came to know that true religion is a matter of the heart. In his letter to the exiles in Babylon Jeremiah assures the people that Jehovah would hear them if they prayed to Him even in a strange land. This was altogether new. Jeremiah had the courageous insight to see a religion that was not

national, that was free from all extraneous elements. This religion could be practiced in every land; its demands were spiritual. This inwardness of the message of Jeremiah is strikingly apparent in his prophecies. The Jews in Exile found God in their prayers in the synagogues, and they served Him in the moral and ethical phases of their lives in Babylon, and later, in a restored Jerusalem; all this they learned from Jeremiah.

In the face of political destruction, defeat of purposes and ambitions, changing programs of action and thinking, constant necessity of readjustments, Jeremiah kept his ideals advancing under stress of circumstances that were almost unendurable. This was doubly difficult for the prophet Jeremiah who had a sensitive soul and a tempermental tendency to discouragement. However, in the face of justifiable reason for discouragement, Jeremiah triumphs! And his victory over doubt and fear to a position of hope and faith and spirituality is all the more significant. The prophet suffered reverses, disillusionment, misunderstanding, and persecution. Smaller natures would have rebelled and grown permanently bitter and dismayed. But Jeremiah, in spite of imprisonment and suffering, kept proclaiming his faith in God, who, Jeremiah believed, can make a New Covenant with His children and who is never defeated. Such was the confidence in the Eternal Spirit and His purposes which Jeremiah himself cherished and which he held out to his people to the very end.

In the light of this study of the thinking of Jeremiah it is possible to formulate some conclusions as to the conception Jeremiah's emiah had of God. Jeremiah was not a theologian. Conception of God The content of his prophecies is, primarily, not abstract ideas, but religious experience, his own first and foremost. That is the best starting-point. Such a fact gives more significance to whatever views Jeremiah attained in his theology. A summary of Jeremiah's conception of God might be considered under the following heads: (1) How is God experienced?; (2) What is the nature of God?; and (3) What does the God with such a nature require of His worshippers?

Through the visions by which Jeremiah recognized himself as called to be a prophet of Yahweh, Jeremiah had become aware of How is God Experienced? God's immediate and near-at-hand presence. The prophets before Jeremiah had seen how God spoke to Israel and how His hand had guided the nation's history. Although Jeremiah saw this he saw also that God revealed Himself to individuals in an extremely personal manner. To Jeremiah God was experienced individually because He was a fact of immediate and undeniable existence. God is experienced by the individual, is found by the worshipper through prayer and communion with the Divine. This Jeremiah knew from his own

inner promptings and introspection through which he so firmly and convincingly experienced God. This, the prophet believed, it was possible for every individual to experience; God would enter into a very definite relationship with every sincere Israelite.

The God of Jeremiah, the God whom he had come to know so intimately through the experience of his life, was, first of all, What is the same God of Israel who had not failed to reveal God's Nature? Himself in the past to His prophets and His people. Jeremiah started with the belief in a personal God, a God not far-off but near at hand and willing to reveal Himself (23:23, 24). Personality was always an element in Jeremiah's thinking about God as it had been in the minds of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. Unity and spirituality, also, were attributed to Yahweh by Jeremiah. He thought of the personality of God as being a moral one. Love, mercy and righteousness reign in the divine heart. To know God is to do justice and right; it is to care for the weak and oppressed (9:23,24; 7:3 ff.; 22:15 ff.; 26:13).

Because God is such a God and because the people have practiced falsehood, violence and unfaithfulness, doom is inevitable; it is an ethical necessity, states Jeremiah (2:9; 2:20; 3:3-6; 6:11, 15, 26; 9:7-9, 15; 15:7, 8; 24:9-10). Jeremiah depicts for us, as he saw

it, the way in which a just wrath grows in the heart of a righteous God toward a people who sin and err in the very face of His pleading and love. A moral God could have no other attitude toward sin; He is the Tester and Trier of men's souls; He searches and knows each individual heart (11:20; 17:9, 10). Before God there can be no hypocrisy; only genuine and sincere devotion can abide (2:5; 31:20). Jeremiah looked upon the sin of his people as being that of worshipping strange gods and forsaking Yahweh, who alone deserved their utter devotion. Idols, in the prophet's thinking, were no gods at all (2:11; 8:19; 18:15). Yahweh, God of Israel, alone is God because He is active and effective in history. Jeremiah's conception of God included the explicit denial of the existence of other gods. Idolatry, it seemed to Jeremiah, was irrational and irreligious. This was a great step forward in Israel's thinking about God. At first, Hebrew religion did not deny the existence of other gods but it affirmed that Yahweh alone is the true God of Israel. Later, the thought existed that, while other gods are powerless to help and save their people, Yahweh is able to deliver His people from all difficulties. Later still, through the eighth century prophets, more ethical content was put into the conception of Israel's God.

Beside the God of justice, love and righteousness there can be none other, but it took time for this inevitable and logical conclusion actually to be formulated in the thinking of the prophets. Deutero-Isaiah was destined to stand foremost here with his emphasis upon the universality of God, but Jeremiah pioneered in the realm of denying existence to the gods that claimed the allegiance of other peoples (2:11; 5:7; 16:20). Jeremiah anticipates the final and pure monotheism at which Hebrew religion eventually arrived with such firm and sure conviction. According to Jeremiah this belief in monotheism is founded upon the very character of the God of Israel (10:14, 15; 14:22).

There is very little, if any, of the transcendence of God to be found in the thought of Jeremiah. God is to him an immediate, personal, friendly, and spiritual Presence with whom he entered into full and intimate communion. The prophet firmly believed that this experience could be shared by everyone who sought God in uprightness of heart. What had been between himself and God must be between every human soul and the Divine. Israel is in Yahweh's hand, states Jeremiah. He has a mind toward His people, a plan for them (18:1-11). This gracious God purposed a relationship between Israel and Himself which could not be broken by any adverse outward circumstances. God is enthroned in the universe and is im-

manent, present in every human heart. Such a God could raise up a religion in the individual worshipper's heart which could continue when all outward and material symbols had vanished into nothingness. God is a God who can make a new and everlasting covenant with His people (31:31-34). This God can be depended upon, declares Jeremiah. When all else had failed the prophet was not disappointed in his reliance upon God's presence and fellowship (17:7, 8). Furthermore, God not only enters into personal relationship with every individual and calls His prophets to be His spokesmen, He also watches over His word to perform it in a world which seems careless and indifferent to truth (1:11-12). Jeremiah believed that the God of Israel does not forsake His people when they seek Him with sincere hearts. He, the living God, still operates in history and is willing to work if only His people seek Him where He may be found (2:8). God is God of all the nations; He is God of Israel, too; but, most of all, He is the gracious God of each individual personality.

A God with such a nature and who does so much for Israel makes certain requirements of His worshippers, requirements that are

What Does God Require of His Wor- shippers?	in keeping with His nature. When Jeremiah thought of God's personality as being a moral one he viewed that moral character as being reflected in moral demands,
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the demands of the conscience, the inner man. Man's moral convictions and urgent promptings are the very voice of God. God is not indifferent to moral standards; He expects justice, love, mercy and righteousness on the part of His worshippers. Because of this moral nature of God there can be but one kind of relation between Yahweh and His people - that must be a moral relation, showing itself in the everyday dealings between men. The favor of God, says Jeremiah, is not dependent upon the continuation of the nation, its independence, or its organized kingdom, nor yet, upon the Temple or the peoples' merely ritualistic sacrifices there. God does not require an obedience to external laws, but He does ask sincere heart obedience. The genuine repentance and loyalty found in the human heart determine the existence of God's favor, of an intimate, strength-giving fellowship between God and the individual. Religion, then, in the thinking of Jeremiah, was the embodiment of the will and character of this God whose moral nature made moral demands of His worshippers. Yahweh had chosen Israel as a nation to be His own people, and, in return, the very nature of God demanded a complete surrender and loyal obedience to righteousness on the part of each individual.

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